



## **Media Watch Report Afghanistan Journalism Freedom Report # 20**

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The spread of insecurity in the country presents serious challenges to journalists and the media community in general.

On one side, the Taliban continue to threaten lives of reporters, and, on the other side, the government authorities continue to put pressure on them. Such actions are causing great un-ease in the media circles of Afghanistan and raise concerns that a new era of government censorship could be on its way in to the country. Threats from Taliban and pressures from government on media outlets automatically cause self-censorship resulting in poor freedom of expression and reporting.

The Taliban continues to accuse journalists of backing the government of Afghanistan and the governmental circles deem that journalists and media outlets are trying to weaken them by broadcasting news and programs critical to the government. Aside from this, what is clear is that journalists continue to carry out their duties and endeavor to develop and broadcast un-biased news and critical programs in order to improve the overall organization level of the State – not to discredit it. Without an independent media, that is unafraid to criticize the establishment the people of Afghanistan would not be able to access the truth, it is imperative that the media remains independent from the state.

In this MWR, the following issues are investigated:

- Afghan Journalist, Anwar Saleh, killed in Hangu area of NWFP, Pakistan
- Sharif Hasanyar, news coordinator of Tolo TV, detained by The National Security Directorate
- Resignation of Najib Roshan, Director of (RTA) National Radio and TV
- Taliban threatens reporters and those working in the media
- Release of Abdul Qudoos from jail, reporter for Radio Sulh in Jabulseraj.
- The Indian movie “Kabul Express” banned in Afghanistan.
- Ban imposed on the Kabulpress website by Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Pak-Afghan Journalist Association [*sec: Media Association*] formed in Kabul
- Afghanistan Press Club to be launched by *Nai Supporting Afghanistan Open Media*
- The State-run TV of Khost province relaunched
- First issue of “*The journalist*” published by Afghanistan National Union of Journalists

## **Afghan Journalist, Anwar Saleh, killed in NWFP, Pakistan**

Anwar Saleh, a reporter from Afghan Zhagh Weekly, was killed by unidentified gunmen in Hangu area of NWFP, Pakistan.

Anwar Saleh worked with the State-run Radio of Khost province, the BBC and most recently with Da Islam Zhagh Weekly. He was beheaded in Hangu area of NWFP, Pakistan, by a gang of unidentified armed men.

Dr. Habib Shah, the editor-in-chief of Afghan Zhagh, said that Anwar Saleh was about to write religious articles and satirical poems for the weekly newspaper. Concerning the killing of the reporter, he told Media Watch that “one of the reasons behind the killing of Anwar Saleh was his religious debates and arguments with Taliban in Hangu since he had sufficient religion related knowledge and had gone to Pakistan for further education. Anwar Saleh was also questioning the actions of the Taliban through his satirical poetry.”

Dr. Habib Shah added: “When I talked to his family, they said they were also sure that the Taliban are responsible for his killing since Anwar Saleh had no enemies.”

Engineer Mirwais, editor-in-chief for Da Zwan Zhagh, in Khost province, who used to be a colleague of Anwar Saleh, also believes that he was killed by the Taliban.

Mr. Mirwais told Media Watch: “The Taliban have widespread operations in the frontier areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, it is very likely that they killed him due to his opposition to their actions.”

Media Watch made an attempt to contact the family of Anwar Saleh but the family had traveled to Pakistan for his funeral procession.

An important point to stress is that the Ministry of Information and Youth was not aware of the murder of Anwar Saleh. The spokesman of the Ministry, Mr. Hameed Nasiry Wardag, told Media Watch: “So far, we have no information in this regard.”

Media Watch believes that the killing of Anwar Saleh demonstrates that Afghan refugees, journalists in particular are facing real danger in Pakistan and that the Afghan Government should officially notify its Pakistani counterpart of its responsibilities in this regard.

It seems that the Ministry of Culture and Youth was not notified of Anwar Saleh’s murder. This shows a total lack of attention from the Government of Afghanistan to the issue of freedom of speech. According to the Constitution, the government of Afghanistan is obliged to protect the lives of Afghan nationals. So far, the government has failed to fulfill this obligation.

## **Sharif Hasanyar, news coordinator of Tolo TV, detained for 30 hours**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> of Dalwa, 1385 [Jan, 22, 2007], Mohammad Sharif Hasanyar, a reporter and news coordinator for Tolo TV was detained by officials of The Department# 90 The National Security Directorate. The reason given for his detention was his relationship with Dr. Hanif, the former spokesman of the Taliban who was recently arrested by security forces. Hasanyar was released after spending more than 30 hours in custody.

Concerning the detention of Mr. Hassanyar, Media Watch was told by Mohammad Sediq Ahmadzada, head of the executive board of Tolo TV: “the authorities of Department#90 of the National Security Directorate came to the Tolo TV office and wanted Mr. Hassanyar to accompany them, but the Tolo TV management requested their ID cards and an official letter of inquiry. The officials came back with an official inquiry letter issued by the aforementioned Department of the National Security Directorate. They then assured Tolo TV authorities that Mr. Hasanyar would only be questioned for half an hour regarding a Pakistani whom, they claimed, was acquainted to him. However, Mr. Hasanyar was held in custody for more than 30 hours and was released in the evening of 3<sup>rd</sup> of Dalwa, 1385 [Jan, 23, 2007].”

Halim Tanwir, Director of Afghanistan International Press Center and Advisor to The Minister of Culture and Youth, told Media Watch: “Concerning such cases, the Ministry of Culture and Youth has a commission entitled ‘Commission on Media Violations’ which investigates media violations and, when necessary, refers cases to justice authorities. Such steps have not been taken in the case of Mr. Hasanyar. We have not been contacted by the National Security Department and are not aware of the case.”

Mohammad Sharif Hasanyar talked to Media Watch after his release from custody He believed the reason for his detention was his telephone contact with the former spokesperson of the Taliban and said: “Initially the National Security authorities told me that a Pakistani admitted having telephone contacts with him. However, after being taken to Department#90, I was asked about the reason for my contact with Dr. Hanif,, I told them that I was a journalist and, according to the principles of journalism I have the right be in contact with parties opposed to the government. Fulfilling such a duty is in no way an indication of personal inclination towards the Taliban and my conversation with Dr. Hanif only contained news related to fighting.”

He added: “In reply to the inquiries made by Department#90, I replied that media work requires establishing contacts with different sources because news should be impartial and un-biased.”

In a news conference at Setara Hotel on 4<sup>th</sup> of Dalwa 1385 [Jan, 24, 2007], Sayyed Aqa Fazel Sangcharaki, head of The Afghanistan National Journalists Union, condemned the action of The National Security Department as a violation of the applicable laws of the country. He said: “According to the Law on Mass Media, the National Security Department must refer such a case to the Ministry of Culture and Youth. It is then the decision of The Commission on Media Violations whether the contact between a journalist and the former spokesman of Taliban is a crime or not. If Mr Hasanyar is found guilty the case will be passed to the National Security Department. However, this process was not respected and the journalist was detained without legal authorization.”

Furthermore, following a resolution issued by the Afghanistan National Journalists Union, the State authorities are required to comply with the provisions of the Law on Media and governmental bodies should avoid hastiness in the detention of journalists.

Qasim Akhgar, head of the Freedom of Speech Association, also regarded the detention of Mr. Hasanyar as a violation of the principles of Freedom of Speech and Open Media. He asked journalists to stand strong against what he called the pressure of government against media outlets and journalists.

According to the laws of Afghanistan, there are three crimes which can lead to detaining someone: material, moral or legal fault.. In this case, none of those elements apply and, therefore, the security

authorities should not have detained him. According to the 27<sup>th</sup> article of the Constitution, “no deed shall be considered a crime unless ruled by a law promulgated prior to commitment of the crime.”

So far, contacts between journalists and an opponent of the Afghanistan State has not been ruled as a crime in the Law on Media or the Penal Code. The Tolo TV journalist was therefore detained without legal authorization. Actions taken by State Authorities should comply with the applicable laws. The authorities should refrain from breaching the law as they are the very ones who enforce them.

It is likely that through such actions, the government is trying to create a climate of self-censorship where the media will refrain from broadcasting impartial news and programs critical towards government. At least, there are circles inside the government which can not tolerate Freedom of Expression and make the most of the smallest pretext to apply pressure on the media and journalists. However, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of media have been clearly stipulated in the mother law, the Constitution of the country; the State and people of Afghanistan are obliged to respect it.

### **Najib Roshan, Director of National Radio and TV, resigns due to recent tensions with the Minister of Culture and Youth**

Najib Roshan, who submitted his resignation letter to the President of the State, says he resigned from his post due to the hindrances created by Abdul Karim Khuram, Minister of Culture and Youth Affairs.

A paragraph of his resignation letter, states that “the first mission the media has in our country is to ensure information flow and to improve public awareness, regardless of ideological beliefs and free of tribalism. How can the framework of a system be called pluralistic and non-ideological while its content and motives are totalitarian?”

In an exclusive interview with Media Watch, Mr. Roshan said: “I resigned as an objection to the totalitarianism of some circles inside the system. Mr. Khuram is thinking about Talibanisation of the system and was trying to restrict freedom of the National Radio and TV. I tried to compromise with him as much as possible and continue the reforms in the National Radio and TV. He continued to restrict my work to the extent that he barred the kids who would prepare TV programs from entering the premises of the National TV. I was therefore compelled to resign from this post.”

Based on Sanjar Suhail’s claims, the editor of RTA news room, the number of the employees who were fired reaches up to 54, 3 of them including Sanjar Suhail were official employees. But Najeeb Roshan told earlier Media Watch that almost 80 employees were fired by Karim Khuram.

Tensions with the Ministry of Culture and Youth started when Abdul Ghani Mudageq was appointed by the President of the State as the Head of the Broadcasting Department of Radio Afghanistan. Najib Roshan, alleged that the Minister of Culture and Youth subsequently sacked around 80 employees of the National Radio and TV Directorate as they were not hired officially.

Regarding the appointment of Mr. Mudageq, the Minister of Culture and Youth told Media Watch: “Mr. Roshan never paid attention to Radio Afghanistan and I therefore had to appoint another person to this post.” Concerning the dismissal of employees hired by Mr. Roshan, the minister added: “They were working without any contract and were receiving excessively high salaries. Their work was therefore illegal.”

Mr. Roshan rejected the claim of Mr. Khuram and alleged that the abovementioned employees were hired with legal contracts and were able to provide efficient work in TV productions. He acknowledged, though, that the reforms in Radio Afghanistan did not take place due to the attention required by the National TV.

On this matter, Roshan said, "Since we faced a serious competition with private TV outlets, we tried to prioritize reforms in the TV."

Media Watch views the tension between Mr. Khuram, Minister of Culture and Youth and Mr. Roshan, the ex-director of National Radio and TV to be an ideological difference rather than an administrative problem.

The political back ground of both of them shows that they were likely to stand against each other. Mr. Khuram was previously a member of a fundamentalist party, the Islamic Party, which was headed by Gulbudeen Hekmatyar. Mr. Roshan clearly accused him of having fundamentalist ideology, while the supporters of the Minister of Information and Culture accused Mr. Roshan of being a member of the Shula-e-Jawid communist party. It is unfortunate that political differences have caused good staff to lose their positions.

On the other hand, the National Radio and TV department have a legal obligation to move towards becoming Afghanistan's public broadcaster, not a government entity. The present situation shows that the government is trying to continue to keep these national media outlets within its framework and to restrict their legally stipulated freedom.

Some elements inside the system are trying to impose restrictions on media and to control state-run media in order to launch programs in support of the system. It has been demonstrated that in such cases, the people will turn to foreign media to obtain information.

### **Taliban threaten reporters and media outlets via messages and telephone calls in the South and East of the country**

Recently, a letter was received by Lal Padshah Azmoon, a reporter at Radio Ashna - VOA in the eastern zone. The letter was signed by a person named Qari Abdul Rahman, military representative of the Taliban in the eastern zone. It contained a serious threat to the lives of Mr. Azmoon and other journalists in the provinces of Nengahar, Laghman, and Kunar.

Lal Padsha Azmoon, told Media Watch, "In the letter that I received, journalists have been accused of biased reporting and of launching pro-governmental propagandas. In this letter, the Taliban have warned that if journalists publish any war related figures provided by the government and do not publish the figures provided by the Taliban concerning casualties, their lives will be at risk."

Mohammad Zia Bomia, chairman of the Afghanistan Committee for Defending Journalists expressed concern and alleged that, in the mentioned letter, not only Lal Padsha Azmoon, but also some other journalists and media outlets such as Tolo TV and Pajhwok News Agency have been threatened and accused of violating neutrality and siding with the United States of America.

In addition, journalists of foreign media outlets in the southwestern provinces of the country also complained that some local Taliban commanders threatened them via telephone calls and required them to leave the area.

A BBC broadcast stated that: “The mentioned commanders are not famous Taliban leaders, but they can create problems for journalists in areas under their control.”

Furthermore, Mohammad Amin Mudageq, director of Radio Azadi in Kabul, told Media Watch: “the mentioned threats are made against all journalists and media outlets”

Aimal Pesarlay, head of BBC Radio office in Kabul, confirmed the matter and said that due to security problems, he could not reveal the names of the journalists who were threatened. It is worth highlighting that despite communication of threats through telephones, the Taliban have also entered journalists homes and threatened them directly. Though, Fazel Rahman, journalist at Radio Ashna- VOA in Qandahar province, expressed he was not aware of the threats.

This is proof that the Taliban are not happy with the way journalists conduct their work . They want to intimidate media outlets to publish reports in their favor.

Media Watch expresses concern about the matter and requests State Authorities to pay attention to the security of foreign and domestic media journalists.

However, the State of Afghanistan endeavors to impose restrictions on media rather than prevent such threats. Thus they face the media with yet another challenge.

### **Release of Abdul Qudoos from jail, journalist for Radio Sulh [Peace] in Jabulseraj**

Eleven months, ago while Abdul Qudoos was attending a training course at Nai Supporting Afghanistan Open Media, he was arrested by the police of Parwan Province on the charge of attempted murder on Ms. Samia Sadat, an MP elected from Parwan Province.

Abdul Qudoos was taken to the Court on Crimes against Domestic and Foreign Security, but the court order was adjourned. On 11<sup>th</sup> of Dalwa, 1385 (Jan, 31, 2007), he was declared innocent. However, he remained prisoner for another week. At that time, Abdul Jabar Sabit, Prosecutor General, told Media Watch: “If Mr. Qudoos has been declared innocent by the court; I am ready to issue his release order right away.”

After spending 11 months in custody, Abdul Qudoos was set free on a court order issued one week before.

He told Media Watch: “I underwent tough times during those 11 months. Nine times, I was summoned to the court but the claimant, Ms. Samia Sadat, was absent. There was no evidence concerning the accusation. I spent the period in prison only due to the political influence of Ms. Sadat. After I was declared innocent, Abdul Jabbar Taqwa (governor of Parwan Province) convened a gathering of local elders in order to restore her dignity by making a peace deal between us since she had made a false claim.”

He added: “They decided in my absence that I will not talk to media about this case and that I will not claim the restoration of my dignity and rights.”

Mr. Taqwa said: “I tried to replace enmity and opposition with peace and understanding so that this case could be over. In this meeting, Ms. Zakia Zaki, director of Radio Sulh- Jabulseraj, was present

and the local elders decided that the case should be over. Ms. Sadat declared in front of all members of the meeting that she has neither now nor will in the future have any claim against Abdul Qudoos.

Media Watch attempted to contact Ms. Samia Sadat, but with no success.

Media Watch believes the case of Abdul Qudoos highlights the personal influence high ranking officials have on the judicial process.

Laws of Afghanistan stipulate that the court shall issue a decision within thirty days concerning the innocence or guilt of the accused, while the journalist of Radio Sulh spent 11 months in custody without such a decision.

No authority accepts responsibility for the suffering of Abdul Qudoos during his time in prison. Neither the claimant and the justice authorities nor the prosecutors can compensate the mental and material losses he suffered.

### **Indian Movie Kabul Express banned in Afghanistan**

The movie “Kabul Express”, produced by the Indian Company Yash Raj, was officially banned for insulting a tribe of Afghanistan.

The film entered the Afghan cinema market on 24, 09, 1385 (Dec, 15, 2006) and resulted in an outcry.

On 15, 10, 1385 (Jan, 05, 2007), a number of people gathered in Khatam-ul-Anbia Mosque in Dasht-e-Barchee area of Kabul City and requested a trial for the movie director and Afghan actors.

On 18, 10, 1385 (Jan, 08, 2007), the Cabinet of Ministers ordered an investigation into the case and an inquiry on Hanif Hamgam, the Afghan actor in the film. The Ministry of Culture and Youth also issued a notice, banning the film in Afghanistan.

Abdul Karim Khuram, Minister of Culture and Youth told Media Watch, “We banned the broadcast of the film through TV networks and cinemas in Afghanistan since it contained, humiliation of a tribe from our country. He added: “In addition, CDs of the film were removed from the market. The decision of the Cabinet of Ministers to question Hanif Hamgam does not mean punishing him. This is only an order to make an investigation.” However, when asked what type of humiliation exists in the film, the Minister of Culture and Youth said he had not yet seen the movie.

In an interview with the National TV, Kabir Khan, director of Kabul Express, alleged that there was no humiliating conversation in the film. He claimed that this version of the film had been stolen before entering Afghanistan.

Concerning whether the director of a film bears responsibility or the actors, Engineer Latif Ahmadi, Head of Afghan Film Directorate, replied to Media Watch: “The responsibility for each film remains with the director; and actors play their role only as instructed by the director.”

Engineer Latif Ahmadi added: “Yash-Raj came to Afghanistan with the agreement of the government of Afghanistan and the Afghan Film Directorate studied the script. In the original story, there was no indication of humiliation. Afghan Film and Azim Films Company provided logistic support to Yash-Raj Company.”

On 17, 10,1385 (Jan, 07, 2007), Hanif Hamgam, told Pajhwok New Agency: “For a few days, I have received threatening telephone calls.”

The story of the controversial film “Kabul Express” is about two Indians and one American journalist who enter Afghanistan after the collapse of Taliban and are held hostage by a Pakistani Taleb. The Taleb wants to go to Pakistan while using the hostages as shields. Along the way, they reach an area where the driver tells the Indian journalist that they are in a Hazara region. The journalist asks: “What is a Hazara?” and the driver replies: “Hazara is a tribe that hits nails in the heads of people.” At that moment, the Taleb kills the Hazaras and says: “Were I not here, you would have all died.” But the driver holds his gun pointing to the Talib and says: “You are a dog like them and must stay among them.”

Apparently, the film of Kabul Express resembles Istanbul Express which was made by Bollywood and depicts the post World War II killings in Turkey.

Upon an evaluation of the matter, Media Watch concludes that the decision taken by the Cabinet of Ministers seems irrational on two grounds.

Firstly, why was the film’s storyline not thoroughly studied and the scripts not read? Secondly, according to the laws of Afghanistan any company that enters the country is obliged to submit the storyline to the Ministry of Culture and Youth prior to its entry.

Whenever a company obtains the agreement of the Afghan Film Directorate, the actors and director can then begin their work. Concerning Kabul Express this process did not occur. Firstly, the company entered Afghanistan and only after entry was the scenario was delivered to the relevant authorities. The government of Afghanistan paid more attention to the safety of the film’s hero (John Abraham) rather than the plot, and appointed sixty soldiers [the police] as his security guards.

Secondly, as told by the head of the Afghan Film Directorate, the responsibility of a film lays with the director, not the actors. Therefore, the order to make an inquiry in to the Afghan actor should have not been issued.

It is evident that the Ministry of Culture and Youth should have been aware of the filming process since each country has to protect its own national interests. Respect to the tribes resident in Afghanistan in the interest of all Afghans. Production companies and foreign media outlets that are resident in Afghanistan should consider such sensitivities in their productions.

Media Watch believes this case is more about lack of attention from the Afghan government rather than offences committed by the actors or the director. The government should have studied the story more carefully and should have been aware of the filming process. Concerning Kabul Express, the government, esp. the Ministry of Information and Culture should acknowledge its mistakes and not repeat them in the future.

### **Web site *Kabul Press* blocked for two days at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)**

Kamran Mir Hazar, in charge of [www.Kabulpress.com](http://www.Kabulpress.com), a website dedicated to news, has alleged that the site was blocked for two days at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Mir Hazar told Media Watch: “Kabulpress, a website of news, was filtered out for two days at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the access to the site was blocked for MoFA employees”

He said: “MoFA has installed a filter on its server and therefore the Kabul Press site was blocked. I talked to Sultan Ahmad Baheen, spokesman of MoFA and two days later, I was informed that Kabulpress was accessible at MoFA.”

Concerning filtering out internet sites in Afghanistan, Abdul Kareem Khuram, Minister of Culture and Youth said: “We have no specific law governing this issue and all websites are accessible to any one.”

Sultan Ahmad Baheen, rejected the allegation made by Mr. Mir Hazar that MoFA had blocked the site, and said: “MoFA did not block any site except those believed to be immoral. The allegation of Mr. Mir Hazar is far from the truth.”

In connection with accessibility of internet sites, Aimal Marjan, head of the ITC Department at Ministry of Communications, told Media Watch: “So far, there is no specific provision concerning use of internet sites in the laws of the Ministry of Communications. Hopefully the procedures for how to use this technology will be specified in a law. However, every Ministry and State Organization imposes restrictions on nude and immoral sites.”

Media Watch discussed the matter with some experts in information technology. They said controlling and blocking pornographic sites might affect and block access to some other sites as well.

There are no distinct provisions in the Media Law concerning Internet and copyright and such a deficiency may create problems for news related sites since the State can block some sites under such a pretext.

In his recent contact with Media Watch, Kamran Mir Hazar alleged that [www.kabulpress.com](http://www.kabulpress.com) has once again been blocked at the MoFA. In the next MWR, we will have another look at this allegation.

### **Establishment of Joint Pak-Afghan Association of Journalists (PAIMA) in Kabul**

On 13<sup>th</sup>, 1385 (Jan, 03, 2007), during a visit to Kabul by Mohammad Ali Durrani it was agreed to form an Association of Afghan and Pakistani Journalists.

The purpose of the association is to facilitate joint cooperation between Pak- Afghan journalists. According to Pazhwok News Agency, in a meeting at the Ministry of Culture and Youth, attended by the Pakistani Minister of Information and the Afghan Minister of Culture and Youth , Rahimullah Samander, Head of Afghanistan Free Journalist Association, and Mohammad Riaz, in charge of Peshawar Media Clubs, were appointed by other journalists to be president and deputy president of the association. Eight Afghan Journalists have been nominated as members of the association.

Rahimullah Samandar, has so far refused to take up his position as president and told Media Watch: “So far elections have not been held. We nominated eight journalists for temporary membership in the association who are: Fahim Dashti, editor-in-chief of Kabul Weekly; Najiba Ayubi, Director of Killid Radio, Mohammad Abdullah, journalist at Tolo TV; Dr. Hussain Yasa, editor-in-chief of Afghanistan Daily and Daily Outlook; Ghaus Zelmay; Nooria Ashraf, lecturer at the Faculty of Journalism in Kabul University; Mohammad Amin Mudaraq, Head of Azadi Radio office in Kabul; and Bari Sallam, editor-in-chief of Subh Bakhair Afghanistan programs.

Samandar added, “There were previous attempts to form such an association in order to provide accurate news to people in the two neighboring countries. Nowadays, the news in Pakistan is that the fight in Afghanistan involves Afghan fighters known as the Northern Alliance whereas this alliance doesn’t exist any more.”

He maintained: “Some media outlets in Afghanistan also engaged in false reports against Pakistan. This association will work to eliminate such an atmosphere from the media of the two countries and to promote further cooperation and understanding between the people and governments of both countries.”

However, Sediq Ahmad Zada, executive director of Tolo TV rejected the claim that Afghan media submits false reports against Pakistan and said: “The aim of Tolo TV has always been to broadcast facts and never broadcast false or un-verified programs Tolo TV will keep on following the same path.”

Abdul Hafiz Mansoor, editor-in-chief of Payam-e-Mujadid Weekly, said the formation of the Joint Journalists Association of Pakistan and Afghanistan was a humiliation for the Media community, and said: “the formation of this association on the ground that Afghan media supports false reports against Pakistan, is an insult to Afghan media, because what is published by Afghan media about Pakistan is mostly true and is not baseless propaganda.”

Media Watch believes that formation of PAIMA is good for unearthing facts about Afghanistan so that the people of Pakistan can be aware of the present realities in the country. However, the important issue is that the Afghan members of the association should have a wide representation from all over Afghanistan and appointed by elections at the Afghanistan National Union of Journalists. Also, the Afghan members should realize the delicate nature of their work so that Pakistan will not be able to prevent publication of facts about its actions in Afghanistan.

Pakistan is attempting to prevent Afghan media from publishing reports which reveal and unfold its intervention in Afghanistan. For example, broadcasting Tolo TV was banned not so long ago in Peshawar City. The ban was lifted after the trip of Pakistani Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, to Kabul. However, according to the latest report, the government of Pakistan has once again deprived Afghan refugees and people of Pakistan of watching Tolo TV. The details of this matter will be presented in the coming report.

### **Afghanistan Press Club to be launched by Nai Supporting Afghanistan Open Media in Kabul City**

Nai is set to launch a club called The Afghanistan Press Club. The aim of the club is to provide services to all journalists and the media community.

Abdul Mujeeb Khalwatgar, executive director of Nai, told Media Watch, “We realized the need to coordinate journalists and establish a media news center. Therefore, the center will be able to provide necessary media related services to journalists and media community.”

He added: “In the club, journalists will have access to news sites and will also benefit professionally from the Nai, Journalism Training Radio. Membership of the club is conditioned upon working in a

functional media outlet and residence in Kabul. Membership for journalists based in the provinces is based on their ability to meet once a month with the club in Kabul.

Mr. Khelwatgar said the main condition for membership in the club was impartiality and requested media authorities to cooperate with Nai in this context.

The view of Media Watch is that this club, which will be formed in a month, will be able to assist journalists to receive news and obtain access to news sources.

Abdul Hameed Mubarez, senior advisor to Afghanistan National Union of Journalists, told Media Watch, "Formation of journalists clubs is necessary, not only in Kabul, but also throughout Afghanistan. He added, "Such clubs can play an efficient role by providing ways of broadening journalists knowledge through facilitating the exchange of ideas. As a journalist for a long period, I will become a member of the club upon studying its Articles of Formation because I am keen to share my experience in the press of Afghanistan with young journalists, and to hear and benefit from their views concerning the media in Afghanistan."

It is notable that members of the club will be able to discuss daily reports and live news and draw on the work of each other for the purpose of their professional development.

It is worth mentioning that the first club of journalists (The Kabul Press Club) was formed in Kabul in 2001 with the support of Reporters without Borders [Reporters Sans Frontieres] in Ayena press center. One year ago, the club shifted from Ayena Center to the Center for International Journalism in Shashdarak of Kabul.

### **Khost province State-run TV re-launched**

On 8<sup>th</sup>, Dalwa, 1385 (Jan, 28, 2007), the State run TV of the Southern province of Khost, restarted broadcasting.

Construction of the TV station building cost 200 000 USD and was funded by US PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team). The equipment and supplies were provided by Suhail Haroon Company with the assistance of the International Community.

The director of the newly inaugurated TV station, Sakhi Sarwar Miakhel, said: "After two months of test transmissions, television broadcasting has been officially launched in Khost province. The station will relay 5 hours of programming every 24 hours which will include religious, political, and cultural programs. There are twenty staff members in the station, all of whom are male. The broadcast area of the TV station is 60 Km around Khost city."

The state run TV station of Khost stopped working after the fall of Dr. Najibullah, the ex-president of Afghanistan. Now, it has been rehabilitated and its transmission relaunched.

According to another report, *Paiwastoon* magazine is being printed in Khost city. The freelance publication has 16 pages and its editor-in-chief is Mohammad Rasool Adel.

Mr. Adel commented that he privately funded the publication to reflect the problems faced by people in Khost and the actions taken in the province to promote freedom of speech.

## **First issue of “The Journalist” published by Afghanistan National Union of Journalists**

Khabarnegar (the “Journalist”) was printed on 16<sup>th</sup>, Dalwa 1385 (Feb, 05, 2007), which contains various news, analysis and briefings for journalists. Khabarnegar consists of 16 pages, and contains articles in three languages (Dari, Pashto and English) with the following headlines: Cases of threatening and pressure on media and journalists in Afghanistan during the last year; Special Media Watch Report from Nai; Formation of Afghanistan National Union of Journalists; purpose of media outlets; explanation of the factors behind tensions between media outlets and the State; understanding work in media; and other issues in relation to journalists.

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