World Press Freedom Day

Analytical Report of Afghanistan Journalists' Support Organization.



May 3, 2023

First, we congratulate journalists and freedom advocates on World Press Freedom Day. Less than two years have passed since the collapse of the Afghanistan Republic Government, which led to the death of democracy and freedom of expression in Afghanistan. During this period, alongside the vanishing of almost all civil values in Afghanistan, freedom of expression, freedom of media, the right to access information, and journalists suffered the most.

Heart-breaking accounts reveal that in the first three months of the Taliban's takeover, 43% of media outlets ceased their activities. Of every five female journalists, 4 (84%) have lost their jobs. In 15 provinces, there are no women journalists or female media staff. Last year, two journalists were killed in Afghanistan, and five others were imprisoned and subjected to poor prison conditions.

After the return of the Taliban, 237 incidents of violations of journalists' rights have been reported by the media. 94 journalists were detained, and 49 were arrested and abducted in Kabul, the country's capital. Journalists have been violently attacked 30 times while reporting., and 16 journalists were injured in an explosion in Balkh six weeks before this report.

Another concerning aspect of this situation is the widespread migration of journalists from the country and the difficulties they face in exile. While many of them do not have legal documents to stay in host countries and suffer unemployment and economic challenges, these pressures have forced some of them to sell their kidneys and body parts so as not to be ashamed in front of their children. Others have been detained and deported by host countries due to the expiration of their visas and residence documents. Unfortunately, journalists in Pakistan, Iran, India, and other countries sustain an uncertain fate.

Journalists who have arrived in Western countries have a relatively better situation. They are dealing with the challenges of learning a new language, improving professional skills, and integrating into a different environment. Still, their biggest concern is that they may be obliged to change their profession and adapt to a new one where they have yet to gain experience.

Kiefernweg 63452 , 5, Hanau, Germany Email: official@ajso.org Cellphone: +491787625102

"Although the exact number of exiled journalists from Afghanistan remains unknown, around 200 journalists and their families in Pakistan are living in uncertainty and hoping for a better future.

Regarding media quality, the challenges for journalists are more profound and complex. All media outlets inside and outside of Afghanistan are concerned about the quality of their media productions. Journalists and active media outlets in Afghanistan suffer severe self-censorship, as no one can express anything without the approval of the ruling regime. While entertainment programs, political debates, and civil analyses have been removed from the media content, the ruling party and their relevant authorities are also not present to answer questions in daily news coverage. False information, fake news, and rumors are rampant on social networks and among the public, while the people's voice is suffocated, and freedom of expression has become a horrifying victim.

The content of social media and international media talks about wars, killings, assassinations, kidnappings, criminal incidents, ideological interrogations, arrests of women and civil activists, and harassment and mistreatment of former soldiers. Poverty and unemployment are getting worse every day. The drug trade and the presence of unknown and foreign terrorist groups are reasons for the spiritual exhaustion and despair of the people. Still, no credible reports are being published because well-known international media outlets that the Afghan people have been familiar with for decades, such as BBC, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Deutsche Welle, etc., are blocked or restricted in Afghanistan.

The collapse of democracy and freedom of expression has caused public opinion in Afghanistan to become cynical about the policies of the global community, the strategies of the United Nations, and the powerful countries that have abandoned the Afghan people to the tyranny of the Taliban. Ordinary Afghans started to believe that the international community had left them and abandoned supporting fundamental rights such as democracy, human rights, women's rights, education, freedom of expression, and freedom of the media.

Despite the fall of democracy and freedom of expression in Afghanistan, which has led to a sense of pessimism among the Afghan public towards the policies of the global community, the United Nations, and powerful countries that have abandoned the people of Afghanistan to the tyranny of the Taliban, there are still glimmers of hope. Journalists, media experts, and journalism professors who have been exiled to various countries worldwide are working to create new media capacities by contacting media outlets and their employees inside and outside Afghanistan.

Building on expertise, experience, commitment, and understanding of the Afghan people's dire

need for accurate information, this group founded the Afghanistan Journalists Support Organization (AJSO) in Europe in August 2022. This organization has been able to establish extensive communication with international organizations by advocating for the rights of journalists and media inside and outside the country and has had remarkable achievements, including:

Establishing coordination among Afghan journalists living in different countries around the world.

We are approaching and cooperating with relevant international organizations and professional bodies to solve Afghan journalists' problems.

Vetting and registering all Afghan journalists in a standardized database.

Sending letters signed by 600 Afghan journalists to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, human rights organizations, international migration agencies, and relevant organizations regarding the hardships and challenges of Afghan journalists.

Besides that, several other fundamental measures are also being implemented to support and protect Afghan journalists from continuing their professional activities. In the meantime, there need to be more media outlets or media centers committed to journalistic ethics. Our proposal and request are to establish a news agency that the people of Afghanistan can trust and be the voice of the Afghan nation inside and outside the country. Thus, it will help reduce confusion, despair, and public distrust and restore Afghans' trust in Afghans in the media.

We have started the year 2023 with the hope that the international community and supporting institutions of journalists will help us to alleviate the suffering of the people of Afghanistan by working together. May 3, "World Press Freedom Day," is the best opportunity to promote these values and uphold freedom of expression in Afghanistan.

Let us remember that freedom is not true as long as truth is not free.

A happy May 3 to all media and media practitioners

Afghanistan Journalists Support Organization