AMSO
Afghanistan Media Support Organisation

Under the Shadow of Fear and Censorship

The State of Media and Journalists in Afghanistan

Analytical Report · Reporting period: 10 June – 10 July 2026

Afghanistan Media Support Organization (AMSO)

Introduction

Between 10 June and 10 July 2026, verified data gathered from across Afghanistan shows a media environment under systematic pressure. Those pressures range from physical violence and censorship to severe barriers to information and ideological interference in how newsrooms operate.

This report examines four dimensions of the current situation: journalists' physical security, access to information, ideological restrictions, and censorship on digital platforms.

1. Key Findings

First dimension: physical security, arbitrary detention, and psychological threats

Journalists' physical safety remained under serious threat throughout the period. The Taliban authorities increasingly used intelligence and security mechanisms, not legal institutions, to control journalists and suppress independent reporting.

Arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment

AMSO documented cases of journalists detained by Taliban intelligence after their reporting. Some were arrested, physically assaulted, and held over routine disputes in several instances as minor as a transport disagreement. Many were released through local mediation rather than any transparent legal process.

Denial of the right to complain, and intimidation

Detained journalists reported pressure and threats in custody, including warnings not to file complaints or speak publicly after release. These practices damage journalists' psychological security and drive a climate of fear and self-censorship.

Second dimension: obstruction by Taliban spokespersons and blocked access to information

Official information channels across Afghanistan increasingly obstruct journalists rather than help them reach public information.

Withheld information and salary losses

Provincial Taliban spokespersons often fail to release information and official footage during working hours, sharing them instead late at night, sometimes around midnight. This forces conflicts between journalists and their newsrooms and has led to salary deductions and professional strain.

Monopoly over news value and distribution

Some security and civilian officials publish information first on their personal Facebook and social-media accounts rather than through official channels open to media outlets. This undermines news organizations, breaks the principle of equal access, and pulls public attention from institutions toward personal platforms.

Third dimension: ideological monitoring and content restrictions

Interventions by the Taliban's Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice continued to weaken the independence and operation of media organizations.

Pressure on radio stations and audio programs

Radio stations reported strict warnings against broadcasting women's voices or taking calls from female listeners. Mandatory inspections and ongoing monitoring of media offices increased.

Restrictions on journalists' personal appearance

Journalists faced continued pressure and monitoring over personal appearance, including enforced rules on beard length and other standards.

Fourth dimension: censorship of reporting on social media

The Taliban authorities moved to control not only traditional outlets but journalists' personal social-media accounts and online publishing.

Restrictions on economic and social reporting

Across the country, journalists were warned against publishing on domestic government matters, public grievances, economic hardship, rising fuel prices, security incidents, and humanitarian conditions. Some faced serious threats of detention for doing so. For safety, AMSO does not disclose the identities of affected journalists.

2. Technological Restrictions and Structural Obstacles

Between 10 June and 10 July 2026, new restrictions further weakened the already limited contact between authorities and media organizations.

Restrictions on smartphones

Several major zones and provincial government institutions imposed strict limits on employees' smartphone use. This blocked access to information, cut journalists' ability to reach officials, and sharply reduced official video interviews, as many employees now avoid recorded interviews for fear of consequences.

3. Impact Analysis Matrix

Challenge	Main factors (10 Jun – 10 Jul)	Direct impact on media
Security & physical threats	Arbitrary detention, physical abuse, intimidation	Spreading fear and rising self-censorship among journalists
Administrative & professional barriers	Obstruction by spokespersons; personal social media prioritised over official channels	Weaker credibility of sources, salary deductions, professional disputes
Technological restrictions	Smartphone limits in government institutions	Fewer documented and visual reports; harder access to information
Ideological restrictions	Ongoing monitoring and censorship by morality authorities	Removal of female voices, content limits, unsafe working conditions

4. Conclusion

This reporting period shows Afghanistan's media sector in a deep, multidimensional crisis. Four observations stand out:

1. Severe restriction of free expression and professional criticism. Limits on reporting economic hardship, humanitarian concerns, and public grievances have gutted the fundamental role of media in society.

2. Systematic decline in access to information. Ineffective official spokespersons, combined with technological restrictions, have created unprecedented barriers to reliable information.

3. Economic and psychological pressure on journalists. Beyond direct security threats, delayed information, professional uncertainty, and salary deductions place journalists under mounting economic and psychological strain.

4. Growing threat to the future of the sector. If these restrictions continue, they endanger the survival of independent media across Afghanistan and drive experienced professionals out of the field.

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