Monthly Analytical Report on the Media Situation in Afghanistan
From 10 September to 10 October 2026
From Physical Pressure to Ideological Coercion and Visual Censorship

Between 10 September and 10 October, the nature of pressure, unlawful interference, and restrictions on images affecting Afghan media underwent a significant shift. Rather than limiting censorship to ordinary news reporting, the Taliban authorities have increasingly pursued three distinct objectives: compelling journalists to produce propaganda in support of Taliban rule, imposing comprehensive restrictions on photography and video recording at meetings, and using the media for political and intelligence purposes.

During this reporting period, incidents of direct physical violence appear to have declined slightly compared with previous months. However, legal ambiguity, the abuse of authority, ideological pressure, and visual censorship have expanded and become more systematic.

1. Geopolitical Pressure and Violations of Media Neutrality (Eastern Region)

In Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman, and Nuristan provinces, local Taliban officials have reportedly demanded that media workers and independent journalists abandon neutrality amid ongoing tensions with neighbouring Pakistan. Journalists have been pressured to publish provocative articles and opinions directly supporting the Taliban authorities and opposing Pakistan.

Analytical finding: Imposing politically motivated and predetermined narratives on journalists fundamentally undermines professional journalistic neutrality in Afghanistan. Such pressure places journalists under considerable financial and professional strain and creates serious challenges to their editorial independence and freedom of thought.

2. Military Threats and the Use of Media as a Military Instrument (Badakhshan)

In Badakhshan province, Ghulamullah Ahmadi, deputy commander of the Taliban's 219 Omar Thalith Military Corps, reportedly issued an explicit warning during a joint meeting with official spokespersons and journalists. He stated that the suppression of the group's opponents was not limited to the battlefield.

Analytical finding: Taliban military officials have argued that the media should adopt the Taliban authorities' position in what they describe as a "soft war." Threatening journalists in military terms risks portraying them as participants in armed conflict rather than independent civilian professionals, thereby exposing them to serious threats to their personal safety and lives.

3. Ideological Recruitment and Political-Religious Training Programmes

The Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture has continued to organise compulsory seminars in Kabul and approximately 16 provinces for journalists and media managers under the stated objective of "enhancing ideological and religious capacity."

Analytical finding: The primary purpose of these programmes appears to be

encouraging journalists and newsrooms to accept the Taliban authorities' ideology and demands instead of adhering to professional journalistic standards. This approach risks indirectly transforming independent media outlets into propaganda instruments for the Taliban.

4. Comprehensive Censorship of Visual Journalism and Official Restrictions (Southern Region)

In the southern region, significant obstacles have been imposed on photography and video recording. The most notable developments include the following.

4.1. Restrictions on Photography and Surveillance in Kandahar

On 8 September, a journalist was reportedly released following intervention by Taliban officials responsible for enforcing the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice's rules, after being detained in connection with taking photographs at the Ghazi Amanullah Khan Martyrs' Square.

On 23 September, following the conclusion of an official meeting at the Kandahar Chamber of Commerce, Taliban inspectors from the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice reportedly verbally threatened journalists in harsh terms and prohibited them from using cameras and taking photographs.

4.2. Official Directive Prohibiting Photography and Video Recording

On 4 October, the Kandahar Directorate for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice reportedly issued an official letter to all provincial departments. Under the directive, journalists were not permitted to take photographs or record videos at any news conferences, meetings, or official visits.

This restriction represents a serious obstacle to visual journalism, limiting journalists' ability to document official activities and independently report on public affairs.

4.3. Detention and Mistreatment over Historical and Political Commentary (Paktia)

In Paktia province, a local journalist was reportedly detained for one day by local Taliban intelligence officials after making a special commentary concerning former Afghan President Dr Najibullah.

According to information from the Afghanistan Media Support Organisation (AMSO), specifically its Committee for Liaison with Media and Journalists, the journalist was physically beaten while in detention. Following a period during which his whereabouts were unknown and pressure to obtain a confession, he was reportedly compelled to provide a written undertaking promising to refrain from discussing similar subjects in the future.

Analytical finding: This incident indicates that the Taliban authorities seek not only to monopolise reporting on current political and military developments but also to suppress historical analysis and political commentary. The use of violence, detention, and coercion reinforces a climate of fear and encourages self-censorship among journalists and media professionals.

4.4. Pressure on Radio Stations (Helmand, Zabul, and Uruzgan)
In Helmand on 18 September, and in Zabul between 27 September and 2 October, Taliban officials from the provincial departments of Information and Culture reportedly monitored the broadcasting content of local radio stations. During this process, station managers were instructed to ensure that their broadcasts complied with the Taliban authorities' prescribed rules and served the interests of the regime.

4.5. Verbal Abuse and Mistreatment (Zabul)
On 2 October, the Taliban-appointed Director of Public Health in Zabul reportedly verbally insulted a journalist and treated them aggressively during an interview with a local media outlet.
These incidents illustrate the continuing pressure on local broadcasters and journalists to align their reporting with the Taliban authorities' expectations.

5. Non-Cooperation and the Monopoly over Information
In the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman, and Nuristan, local Taliban officials and spokespersons reportedly withhold timely, first-hand information from independent and regional media outlets. Instead, information is initially circulated through official and propaganda networks and shared with independent media only after the relevant subject has already become public and the authorities have secured what they consider to be an advantage.

5.1. Failure to Address the Problem
Journalists have repeatedly raised this issue with provincial officials. However, rather than implementing meaningful solutions, the Taliban authorities have reportedly offered only temporary assurances without effective follow-up.

5.2. Misuse of News Priorities to Restrict Access to Information
When private media outlets are unable, due to technical limitations or editorial and newsworthiness criteria, to cover meetings and visits that the Taliban authorities consider important, provincial officials reportedly retaliate by withholding significant and essential information from those outlets.
Analytical finding: Such practices undermine equal access to public information, weaken independent reporting, and create an unfair information environment in which media outlets that align with official priorities receive preferential access while independent outlets face deliberate exclusion.

Overall Analysis and Recommendations
A Shift from Physical Coercion to Ideological and Visual Restrictions
The findings of this reporting period suggest that, although physical detentions may have declined compared with previous months, the expansion of official directives, formal prohibitions, and restrictions on photography and video recording has severely undermined fundamental forms of visual journalism. The pattern indicates a shift

towards more systematic methods of controlling media activity, including administrative restrictions, ideological pressure, and the suppression of independent documentation.

Erosion of Professional Standards and Journalistic Independence

Taliban officials are reportedly pressuring journalists to adopt predetermined positions on geopolitical, military, and ideological issues. These practices pose serious risks to the safety of journalists, professional neutrality, editorial independence, and the credibility of Afghan journalism.

Recommendations

1. **Protect freedom of expression and media independence.** Relevant international organisations and human rights mechanisms should raise concerns about restrictions on independent reporting and demand an end to coercive practices that undermine journalistic neutrality.
2. **Address restrictions on visual journalism.** The prohibition on photography and video recording at official meetings and public events should be reviewed against applicable international human rights standards, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information.
3. **Prevent intimidation and violence against journalists.** Allegations of arbitrary detention, physical abuse, threats, and coerced written undertakings should be independently investigated, and journalists should be protected from reprisals for their professional work.
4. **Ensure equal access to information.** Local authorities should provide timely and non-discriminatory access to public information for independent and private media outlets, without political retaliation or preferential treatment for official propaganda networks.
5. **Safeguard professional journalism.** Compulsory ideological training and demands for politically predetermined coverage should not be used to interfere with editorial independence or compel journalists to promote a particular political or ideological agenda.
6. **Strengthen monitoring and international engagement.** International media freedom organisations, human rights bodies, and relevant UN mechanisms should continue documenting restrictions on Afghan media, assess emerging patterns of censorship, and advocate for effective safeguards for journalists and independent media organisations.

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