
POST 9/11 - FREEDOM OF PRESS & SITUATION OF JOURNALISTS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Freedom of press is not only an important factor for any democratic country, but it is also a vital element for a country's economic growth. The world was changed after 9/11 attacks United States of America declared a war on terrorism. This war was converted into global war on terrorism. Due to the important geostrategic located Pakistan become ally of USA. The coalition partnership between America and Pakistan created security issues at domestic level, which caused deaths of many innocent people including journalists and eventually it all resulted in foreign media declaring Pakistan a Dangerous Place for Journalist. The current research paper highlights and discusses the post 9/11 effect on freedom of press and the overall situation faced by journalists in Pakistan after 9/11.

Keywords: 9/11, Pakistani Media, Freedom of Journalism in Pakistan, Situation of Journalist, Killing Journalist.

ATTACK OF 9/11

After the September 11, 2001 whole world changed and initiated a war on terrorism and brought Pakistan as a key ally state in war against terrorism.

In the early morning of September, 11 two passenger airplanes were crashed into the New York based iconic building of America known as World Trade Center (Twin Towers). The destruction of Twin Towers not only caused the loss of billions of dollars but took the lives of 5000 innocent people. American suspicion quickly fell on Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden and since Osama bin Laden was in Afghanistan. America demanded Afghanistan to extradite Osama bin Laden and expel al-Qaeda from Afghanistan. Several meetings were held between US and Afghanistan but to no result. In response, on September 14, 2001 the United State Congress passed a bill "Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF)" which authorized the use of American armed forces against those responsible for the attacks on September, 11. Consequently, on October 7, 2001 the War in Afghanistan began when US initiated aerial bombing targeting Taliban and al-Qaeda camps and by December, 2001 within a short period of three months the US army overthrew the Taliban rule of Afghanistan and handed over the government to Northern Alliance.

Later, on November 28, 2001 in German city of Bonn a conference was held commonly known as Bonn Conference in which it was decided to form an interim government to temporarily rule Afghanistan under the leadership of Hamid Karzai who subsequently elected as President in 2004.

Pakistan being a neighbor to Afghanistan played a key role in American war in Afghanistan. Pervaz Mushraf then ruler in Pakistan accepted American point of view awarded Pakistan received status of a strategic alliance with America. However, Mushraff's actions were criticized internally especially by the religious and ethnic groups. (Lawrence Ziring, 2004) in his book stated that: "Musharraf's decision to assist the United States was condemned in conservative Muslim circles both in Pakistan and beyond. In Afghanistan, Muslims clerics and scholars were virtually all reported to be in support of Osama bin Laden and they called upon the Taliban regime to offer him protection. The Jamaat-e-Islam and the different functions of the Jamiat Ulema Islam condemned the American air strikes and the incursion in to the neighboring state. Taking to the streets, the Islamic parties tried to rally massive demonstrations against the Americans and especially against Musharraf for having yielded to a non-Muslims power" (Lawrence Ziring, 2004). Economy ally of United States was criticized by religious extremists. Jamaat-e-Islami and the different factions of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam condemn the attacks of USA. These religion parties arranged reversal protests on roads against the air states of USA.

Post 9/11 former President Mushraff took several strict actions against militants without realizing the ground reality and since all those aggressive actions were highly influenced by American government the religious and ethnic groups in Pakistan condemned those actions and later found support in the general public who were already feeling negativity in American intentions. As a result, Pakistan actions against militants seriously backfired and caused an internal dispute in Pakistan. Many areas in Pakistan became unsafe for international and local journalists to report due to violent protest and later it started resulting in deaths of several journalists. The International Federation of Journalist in their report "End Impunity in Pakistan" also discussed the above fact in the following words: "Impunity has taken deep root in Pakistan, particularly with the rise in terrorism after the country aligned itself with the US-led coalition against al-Qaeda and other militant groups in post-9/11 Pakistan" (IFJ Report, 2016).

The said report clearly indicates that Pakistan's alliance with US on war on terrorism not only increased terrorism in Pakistan but also amplified crimes against journalists such as kidnapping and killing. The International Federation of Journalists issued a report according to which during the period of 1990 to 2015 Pakistan was ranked as the fourth most dangerous country for journalists to work due to large number of journalist being killed.

The aftermath of 9/11 impacted on journalism in Pakistan; several journalists lost their lives while reporting in the field. The 2001, report issued by Committee to Protect Journalists about freedom of press in Pakistan also highlighted the same fact. Even under democratic rule, journalists had complained of routine surveillance and harassment. Journalists were far more vulnerable to harassment than the foreign correspondents who came to Pakistan in droves following the September 11 attacks on the United States. Local journalists working in the tribal areas faced a different sort of threat from local administrators who wield absolute power over their domains. Persons accused under the FCR are denied due process of law, including the right to counsel. FCR trials are held by a tribal council, known as a jirga. Pakistani journalists are extremely vulnerable to pressure from religious parties. This became starkly apparent early in the year, when the Peshawar-based newspaper *The Frontier Post* came under fire for its inadvertent publication of a letter to the editor that included derogatory references to the Prophet Mohammed. Although senior management at the newspaper claimed the letter appeared by mistake and apologized for failing to stop its publication, district officials responded to complaints from local religious leaders by shutting down the paper and ordering the immediate arrest of seven staff members on charges of blasphemy.

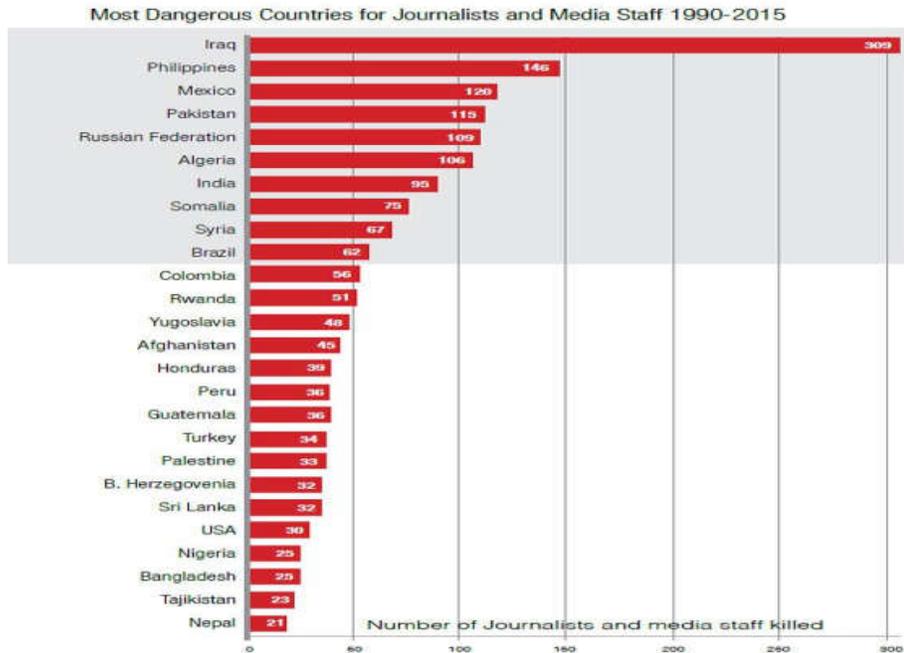
Press has always been under attack in Pakistan power elites and militant always tried to control the media to work for their own agenda. The war on terrorism immensely affected the freedom of press and journalism in Pakistan which is also very evident in the 2017 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters without Borders according to which Pakistan ranked at 139 out of 180 countries.

After 9/11 and post America invasion of Afghanistan; The militants group and elements of Taliban in Pakistan realized the importance of media and for such purpose launched several FM Radio stations to shape perceptions of people. They also approached many local journalists who can help them reach the public at large and when local journalist refused to be a part of terrorist propaganda those journalists were tortured, kidnapped and even brutally murdered. The journalists of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and tribal areas were victimized greatly since they were constantly pressurized by the government and the militants groups for support which even affected their jobs and many of them left with no money or had to relocate.

On the other hand, the journalists working in city were victimized differently; Pakistan was confronting internal turbulence, target killings and suicide bombings became a regular thing and since Pakistani journalists were not specifically trained to report in these circumstances many of them lost their lives while reporting. One such incident happened in Quetta on August 8, 2016 when a community lawyer Bilal Ahmed was attacked and when

some journalists reached the hospital to report the incident a second bomb was blasted which took the lives of more than 100 people including the live of Aaj TV reporter Shahzad Ahmed and Dawn TV cameraman Muhammad Khan.

There are several incidents similar to above which obstructed the path of freedom of press and after 9/11 violence against press and journalists only elevated. Many reports and statistics are released by national and international organizations which reflected the number of deaths of journalists since 9/11 in Pakistan. According to a report issued by Express Tribune 45 journalist were killed during the period of 2004 to 2013, International Federation of Journalists also reported that 115 journalists were murdered in Pakistan during 1990-2015 and United Nations official report suggest that 102 journalists lost their lives while reporting in Pakistan between the period of 2001-2015.



<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1040096/at-least-2297-journalists-killed-since-1990-ifj/>

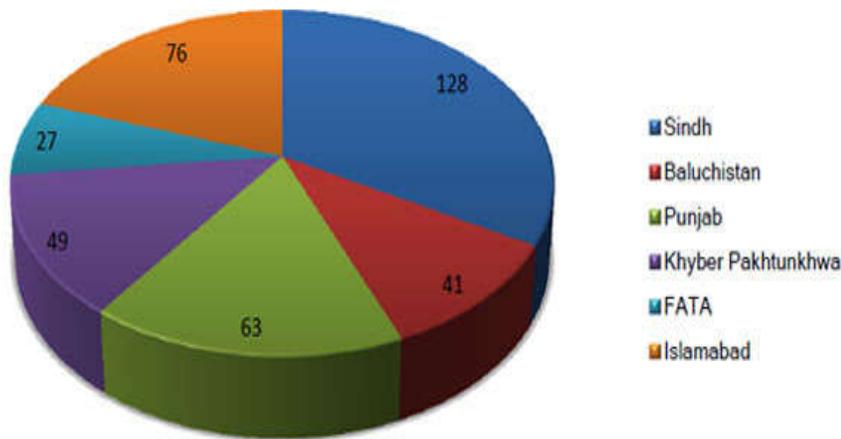
“End Impunity in Pakistan” report while discussing the situation of press and journalist in Pakistan states that: “Lawlessness in Pakistan, forced the journalists to stop their professional duties. Government failed to investigate these cases and punish the murderers” (IFJ Report, 2016).

Apart from above there are many international reports which declared Pakistan as a dangerous place for journalists. Journalists in Pakistan are faced

with extreme difficulties in disposing their duties. United Nations in one of its report also considered Pakistan as an unsafe place for journalists and mentioned that “Pakistan was considered unsafe for journalists. It has become difficult for media personnel to work in the countries. Because of the Afghanistan war, the areas bordering Afghanistan; including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan and FATA, were most dangerous areas for journalists. At least 71 journalists and media workers have lost their lives since 2001 while pursuing their duties in Pakistan” (UN Report, 2017).

Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) also issued a report on the safety and security of journalists in Pakistan between 2001-2016. According to the said report, 47 media people were murdered, 164 injured, 88 assaulted, 21 kidnapped and 40 were illegally arrested and out of 384 violent incidents against journalists there are only 2 cases (Murder of Jang and Geo reporter Ayub Khan and Wali Khan Baber) in which few people were actually charged. According to PPF report “Pakistani journalists are not only targeted by militants but also by political, religious, ethnic and other pressure groups. Incidents of threats, attacks and killings of journalists in Pakistan are the clear evidence of how critical the situation is due to thriving culture of impunity” (Pakistan Press Foundation Report 2001).

PPF MEDIA VIOLENCE INDEX 2001-2015



<https://www.geo.tv/latest/7188-71-journalists-killed-in-pakistan-since-2001-report>

The above report clearly indicated that journalists in Pakistan were not only killed by militants groups but many were violently murdered by tribal and feudal lords as well as by the hands of so called democratic political parties and ethnic groups of Pakistan. Journalists were tortured, abducted, detained, injured and brutally beaten in Pakistan especially in the areas of Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA which were the hot spots for crime against journalists.

PPF MEDIA VIOLENCE INDEX 2001-2015							
	Killed while working	Murdered	Injured	Assaulted	Abducted	Detained	Total
2015	0	1	1	19	0	2	23
2014	0	7	41	6	0	2	56
2013	4	5	12	0	1	0	22
2012	2	5	25	3	1	0	36
2011	2	4	10	0	2	0	18
2010	8	5	15	7	2	5	42
2009	2	3	14	4	5	5	33
2008	1	5	11	2	4	2	25
2007	3	3	6	43	0	0	55
2006	1	2	14	3	2	5	27
2005	1	2	5	0	1	4	13
2004	0	1	3	1	1	2	8
2003	0	2	0	0	1	10	13
2002	0	2	3	0	1	1	7
2001	0	0	4	0	0	2	6
Total	24	47	164	88	21	40	384

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/7188-71-journalists-killed-in-pakistan-since-2001-report>

The area wise statistics further identified the number of violent killing of journalist in the four provinces of Pakistan occurred after 9/11. According to such statistics 21 journalists and media persons were killed in Baluchistan, 19 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 9 in FATA, 15 in Sindh, 4 in Punjab and 3 in Islamabad. Crime against journalism and journalists immensely affected the freedom of press in Pakistan. Many journalists either left with no earning, relocated or preferred to impose a self-censorship on their work for survival.

Such in the case of Syed Saleem Shahzad was a notable Pakistani investigative journalist who often wrote for leading European and Asian

media. He was the Pakistan Bureau Chief for Asia Times Online (Hong Kong) and Italian news agency Adnkronos (AKI).

Syed Saleem Shahzad covered variety of topics throughout his career, including global security issues, Pakistani Armed Forces, Islamic movements, and Muslim resistance movements in Lebanon and Iraq. The Taliban and Al-Qaeda were among the regular topics of his articles. He was an international journalist who travelled thoroughly in the Middle East, Asia and Europe. He also wrote for *Le Monde Diplomatique* (France), *La Stampa* (Italy) and *Dawn* (Pakistan). He was South Asia Correspondent for Italian news agency Adnkronos International (AKI). His opinionative articles also appeared in the Qatari-based *Islamonline.net* and *Boston Review*.

Throughout his career he interviewed several Islamist militants which also include Al-Qaeda prominent terrorist and also those terrorist which later recognized by the world such as Sheikh Essa, Sirajuddin Haqqani and Qari Ziaur Rahman. He also interviewed Ilyas Kashmiri shortly after Ilyas was appointed chief of Al-Qaeda's military committee.

His last book *Inside Al-Qaeda and the Taliban: Beyond Bin Laden and 9/11*, was published shortly before his death on May 30, 2011. He was found dead just a day after he was kidnapped and his body was found in a canal in North-east Pakistan, showing signs of torture.

Similar thing happened with Daniel Pearl who was a popular journalist working for *The Wall Street Journal* with American and Israeli citizens. Pearl started his professional journalism career at the *North Adams Transcript* and *The Berkshire Eagle* in western Massachusetts. From there, he moved to the *San Francisco Business Times* Affairs. His most notable investigations covered the ethnic wars in the Balkans, where he discovered that charges of an alleged genocide committed in Kosovo were unsubstantiated. He also explored American missile attack on a supposed military facility in Khartoum, which he proved to have been a pharmaceutical factor.

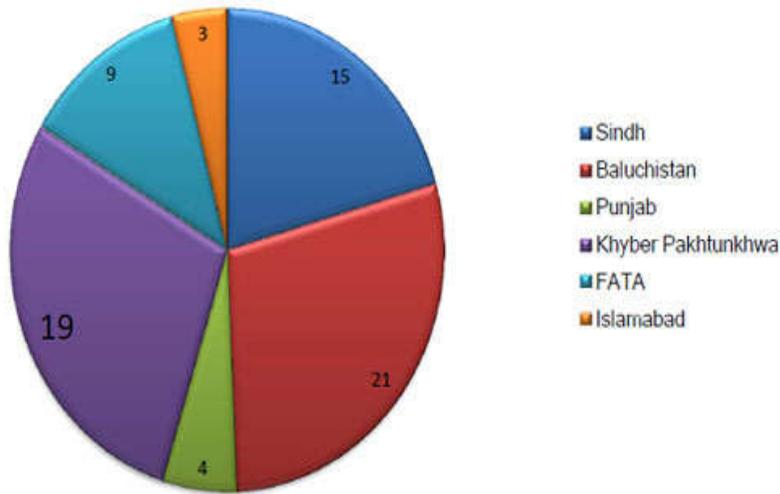
On January 23, 2002, on his way to what he thought was an interview with Sheikh Mubarak Ali Gilani at the *Village Restaurant* in downtown Karachi, Pearl was kidnapped near the *Metropole Hotel* at 7:00 pm by a militant group calling itself the *National Movement for the Restoration of Pakistani Sovereignty*. Nine days later, the terrorists beheaded Pearl. On May 16, his severed head and decomposed body were found cut into ten pieces, and buried, along with an identifying jacket, in a shallow grave at *Gadap*, about 30 miles (48 km) north of Karachi.

A recent well know case of *Wali Khan Babar* is another example of journalist killing in Pakistan. Babar was a Pakistani journalist working for *Geo News*. He was very active as a journalist for 4 years. On 13 January 2011 he was killed by a gunman in the *Liaquatabad* area of Karachi.

According to the committee to protect journalist Babar was confirmed as the first journalist killed in a work-related death in 2011.

According to journalists based in tribal areas of Pakistan there are 10 journalists who were violently murdered in the tribal areas while reporting. These journalists include Nasrullah Khan Afridi (Bara), Misri Khan Orakzai (Orakzai Agency, Hangu), Hayatullah (North Waziristan), Pervaiz Khan, Abdul Wahab (Mohmand Agency), Allah Noor Wazir, Amir Nawab Khan (South Waziristan), Naseer Afridi (Darra Adam Khel), Ibrahim Khan and Noor Hakim (Bajaur Agency), whereas, another journalist Mohammad Younis has been missing in South Waziristan since two-three years. Journalists were forced to move Peshawar or other nearby safe areas.

**Journalists Killed and Murdered in Pakistan
2002-2015**



<https://www.geo.tv/latest/7188-71-journalists-killed-in-pakistan-since-2001-report>

CONCLUSION

To put it starkly but factually, we can say post 9/11 freedom of press faced restrictions and hindrances in Pakistan. Journalists were intimidated, detained and imprisoned who were in areas. Journalists were assaulted, threatened, kidnapped, injured and even violently murdered in the line of duty and when no foreign element forced them out of their responsibility the lack of appropriate resources and specialized trainings to work in conflict/war zones caused inevitable accidents or even lives and despite eighteen years on after 9/11, the situation is still the same.

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