



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary
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26 November 2007

To SAMSN members and friends,

Welcome to the monthly e-bulletin of the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN). The next bulletin will be sent on Friday 14 December and inputs are most welcome. We encourage contributions to let others know what you are doing; to seek solidarity and support from other SAMSN members; and to find out what others are doing in the region.

To contribute, email ifj@ifj-asia.org

SAMSN is a group of journalists' trade unions, press freedom organisations and journalists in South Asia that have agreed to work together to support freedom of expression and association in the region. SAMSN was formed at a meeting of these groups in Kathmandu, Nepal, in September 2004. The group agreed to stand in solidarity and work together for media reform, for an independent pluralist media and to build public respect for the work of journalists in the region.

For further information on SAMSN, visit www.ifj-asia.org/page/samsn.html

Please distribute this bulletin widely among colleagues in the media.

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1. SAMSN and IFJ lead emergency mission to Pakistan

SAMSN and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) worked with the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), an IFJ affiliate, to organise a three-day emergency mission to Pakistan from November 20 to 22 to hold talks with local journalists, media owners and journalists organisations' on strategies to defend free media under the emergency rule imposed by President Pervez Musharraf. Led by SAMSN, the PFUJ and the IFJ, a round-table meeting in Islamabad on November 20 issued a unanimously agreed Declaration calling on the President and caretaker Government to restore freedom of expression in Pakistan and revoke all anti-media actions imposed since 3 November. However, on the same day in Karachi, a reported 160 protesting journalists were arrested and held for six to seven hours. Four journalists were charged. Further discussions, including a November 22 meeting between the PFUJ, the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) and the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Society (CPNS), outlined continuing joint action to protest the Government's actions.

[Click here to read the Declaration of the IFJ/PFUJ conference in Islamabad on November 20, 2007](#)

[Click here to read the statement from the IFJ Mission.](#)



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2. Global Day of Action for the rights of Pakistan's journalists

Journalists' organisations and press freedom groups around the world joined forces on November 15 to support the courageous actions of their colleagues in Pakistan, who have been protesting the government clampdown on the media since 3 November. Journalists' associations in South Asia under the umbrella of SAMSAN as well as affiliates from Southeast Asia, East Asia and the Pacific united for a Global Day of Action to defend the rights of media workers in Pakistan. This was the second Global Day of Action for Pakistan organised by the IFJ and its affiliates and associates this year. Around the world, journalists' organisations and advocacy groups responded by sending letters to Pakistan's missions in their countries. For a round-up of activities, go to www.ifj.org

3. Widow of slain journalist murdered in Pakistan

Mahrnun Nisa, the widow of Hayatullah Khan, whose bullet-riddled body was found in June 2006, was murdered in a bomb attack at her home in Mir Ali. A bomb exploded outside Nisa's bedroom in the early hours of 17 November. Her five children, aged two to 10 and sleeping in the next room, were not hurt in the blast. Nisa had been actively protesting against the abduction and murder of her husband who disappeared in December 2005 after he published controversial images of US Hellfire missile shrapnel. The photos undermined the Pakistani Government's explanation of the death of an al-Qaida figure, Hamza Rabia. For more information visit <http://www.ifj-asia.org>

4. Murder of abducted Nepalese journalist Birendra Shah confirmed

The death of Birendra Shah, who was abducted on 5 October, was confirmed by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). CPN(M) members reportedly told their party they were responsible for Shah's murder and informed the media at a Kathmandu press conference that he was killed on the same day he disappeared. A member of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), and affiliated with Nepal FM, *Dristri Weekly* and Avenues TV, Shah had written about the former rebels' alleged profiteering from timber smuggling and their alleged assault and abuse of opponents. After the Government failed to provide information about Shah's condition or whereabouts, the FNJ held a peaceful protest calling for information about Shah's fate. Fourteen protesters, including FNJ executive members, were arrested and detained by police, before being released. The FNJ plans to lead further protests over the murder. For more information visit <http://www.fnjnepal.org>

5. Journalists' safety precarious in Afghanistan as rocket fired at radio station

A violent attack by gunmen armed with knives on Khalil Amiri, the chief editor of FM radio Faryad, and station coordinator Sheer Agha Netaji in the western province of Herat on November 2 has heightened concern for journalists' safety in Afghanistan. Ghows Zalmay, the President of the National Journalists' Union of Afghanistan, and university student and journalist Syed Parvez has also been arrested this month on unspecified charges filed under broad blasphemy laws. The Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA) also reported threats made against Abdul Mutalib Hamid, the chief editor of community station Radio Saday-e-Nejrab. The threats included a rocket fired at the station that fortunately did not damage the building as well as anonymous calls and pamphlets. "Unless the Government steps up its efforts to bring those responsible to justice, the safety of journalists and press freedom will always be under threat in Afghanistan," said AIJA President Rahimullah Samander. See www.ifj-asia.org

6. Report highlights dangers of provincial reporting in Sri Lanka

According to a fact-finding report issued on November 12 by the IFJ and the International Press Institute (IPI) and the Free Media Movement (FMM), independent reporting in Sri Lanka's provinces faces serious obstruction. The report focused on unsafe and poor working conditions,



weak job security, restrictions on reporters' movements within and between provinces, limited access to officials and information, extreme ethnic prejudice and the metropolitan media's apparent disinterest in reports from outside the capital. The report follows a mission by representatives of the IFJ, IPI and Sri Lanka's Free Media Movement (FMM) to the country's Eastern Province in June. It recommends that editors of media outlets in Colombo visit the country's provinces to better inform themselves of regional issues, and advises that local media personnel be granted greater job security and protection. To read the report, go to www.ifj-asia.org/files/ampara_eastern_sri_lanka_report.pdf

7. Serious attacks continue against media workers in Sri Lanka

Grave concerns are held for a *Uthayan* newspaper proofreader and a newspaper delivery man who are reported missing in Jaffna. According to the FMM, these cases bring the tally of killed and abducted journalists in Sri Lanka to 16 in the past 24 months. Also in Jaffna, the twin brother of journalist Pradeepan Prashanthan was murdered on his way to work in Jaffna city in a suspected case of mistaken identity. Meanwhile, journalists and media houses in Colombo are also under attack. An arson attack on November 21 destroyed the Leader publications printing house that publishes the *Sunday Leader*, the *Morning Leader* and *Sinhala Weekly Irudina* in Colombo, while Arthur Wamanan was arrested over a news item about Minister Mano Wijeratne, published in the *Sunday Leader* on October 25. A day later the Sri Lankan Information Ministry suspended the broadcasting licence of five radio stations belonging to the Asia Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) for airing an allegedly erroneous report about a suspected Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attack. On October 30, Champika Jayawardana, the news editor of the online website www.ethalaya.com, suffered serious injuries after he was shot on his way home from work in Colombo. For more information, go to the FMM website: www.freemediasrilanka.org

Deleted: Lanka to

8. Journalist beaten for exposing army abuses in Bangladesh

The IFJ has received reports that investigative reporter Jahangir Alam Akash, who was arrested at his home in Rajshahi on extortion charges, was later beaten in jail. The *Daily Sangbad* journalist was detained and jailed under emergency provisions, after publishing a report on alleged abuses of power by army personnel. Akash was later treated in hospital for leg injuries sustained in an alleged encounter with an anti-crime and anti-terrorism force under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs. A local human rights organisation, the Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights, informed the IFJ that Akash was released on bail on November 19. For more information, visit www.ifj-asia.org

9. Protests against West Bengal vigilantes

The IFJ has strongly protested intimidation tactics used by armed vigilante action by the Communist Party of India in West Bengal to discourage journalists from reporting there. According to information received by the IFJ, heavily armed cadres of the state's ruling party undertook an operation in early November to "recapture" villages of the Nandigram area that had fallen under the control of a local activist group agitating against the confiscation of land for a chemicals export project. As this campaign was occurring, it is reported that the party also tried to curtail media access to the area and harass and intimidate human rights campaigners. The IFJ fully endorses the call by the National Union of Journalists of India and the Kolkata Press Club for the state government be held accountable for attacks on the media. For more information visit www.ifj-asia.org.

10. Sri Lanka honours excellence in journalism

Two journalism awards in Sri Lanka are boosting the profile of and respect for journalism across the country. A ceremony for the Public Service Journalism Awards 2007, which drew 748 entries,



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was held in Colombo on November 16. The landmark event was organised by the Centre for Policy Alternatives with the support of local media organisations and the IFJ. A second award, the Journalism Prize for Human Rights Reporting, was launched in Colombo by the FMM and the IFJ, with support from the European Commission. The award seeks to promote professionalism, media ethics, diversity, editorial independence and reporting that combats human rights violations. Recognising journalists' contribution to the empowerment of civil society through quality reportage, the prize is intended to strengthen a regional network of journalists committed to promoting human rights.

11. Journalists in Afghanistan receive training in political reporting

Journalists in Afghanistan have undergone training in political reporting and election coverage as part of the IFJ's Media for Democracy in Afghanistan project. Fifteen experienced journalism trainers participated in a train the trainer workshop in Kabul from October 27 to 30. The group focused on training techniques and global best practices in election coverage. The training was followed by a two-day workshop on election reporting for 28 working journalists in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharief. Participants at both workshops stressed that professional safety and security were their priorities for political reporting. In response, the IFJ organised two two-day safety workshops with the International News Safety Institute (INSI). The trained trainers will now undertake three further workshops on reporting elections. The workshops aim to strengthen the capacity of media in Afghanistan to report and interpret elections, providing an understanding of historical context, legal issues and electoral processes. The training modules are constructed around the principles of public service journalism. For more information, visit www.ifj-asia.org

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[Nepal: Nepal Prime Minister and Maoist leader promise action on abducted journalist - 02/11/07](#)

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[Bangladesh: Bangladesh reporter beaten in custody - 29/10/07](#)
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[Philippines: IFJ calls for action over shooting of radio announcers in the Philippines - 26/10/07](#)
[Sri Lanka: Journalist arrested on uncorroborated statement by Sri Lankan Minister - 25/10/07](#)
[Pakistan: Journalist feared kidnapped following death threats in Balochistan - 24/10/07](#)
[Burma: Urgent action needed for media workers detained and missing in Burma - 24/10/07](#)

SAMSN members who have information on a violation of press freedom are encouraged to contact staff at IFJ Asia-Pacific immediately so that action can be taken.

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Bangladesh Journalists' Rights Forum (BJRF), Bangladesh
Dhaka Reporters' Unity, Bangladesh
All India Newspapers Employees' Federation (AINEF), India
Indian Journalists' Union (IJU), India
National Union of Journalists India (NUJI), India
Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), Nepal
National Union of Journalists Nepal (NUJN), Nepal
Nepal Press Union (NPU), Nepal
Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Pakistan
Pakistan Press Foundation, Pakistan (PPF)
Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA), Sri Lanka
Federation of Media Employees' Trade Unions (FMETU), Sri Lanka
Free Media Movement (FMM), Sri Lanka
Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum (BMSF: Human Rights Journalists Forum of Bangladesh)
Media Watch, Bangladesh