



International
Federation
of Journalists

CHRISTOPHER WARREN
President
AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary

March 20, 2007

To SAMSN members and friends

Welcome to the South Asia Media Solidarity Network's (SAMSN) monthly e-bulletin. The next bulletin will be sent on Monday April 16, 2007 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 grouping of journalists' trade unions, press freedom organisations and journalists in South Asia that have agreed to work together to support the freedom of expression and association in the region. SAMSN was formed at a meeting of these groups in Kathmandu 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 <http://www.ifj-asia.org/page/samsn.html>

Please distribute this bulletin widely among colleagues in the media.

In this bulletin:

1. Journalist murdered in Bangladesh
2. Italian journalist captured and branded "spy" in Afghanistan
3. Pakistan TV station stormed
4. International safety and press freedom mission to Pakistan
5. Indo-Pak conflict summit New Delhi February 27
6. Two-day conflict training in Delhi
7. Sri Lanka mission releases press freedom report
8. Sri Lankan newspaper targeted
9. IFJ Congress in Moscow
10. IFJ staff changes
11. Latest South Asia protests

1. Journalist murdered in Bangladesh

Bangladeshi journalist Jamal Uddin was found dead after being reported missing on March 5. Police reportedly recovered Uddin's body the following day, from the Rangamati Tourist Complex, and recorded the cause of death as murder. It is unclear whether Uddin's murder was related to his work as a journalist. Uddin was a local correspondent for Dhaka-based news agency ABAS and regional paper *Dainik Giridharan*. Violent attacks on journalists in Bangladesh have been rising in recent times. The Bangladeshi government has also previously drawn international criticism when it tried to impose general censorship on the news media. Find out more at www.ifj.org.

2. Italian journalist captured and branded "spy" in Afghanistan

Italian journalist Daniele Mastrogiacomo, from daily newspaper *La Repubblica*, and his Afghan guide, known only as Ajmal, were released on April 19, in exchange for five Taliban. They had been held by the Taliban since March 4. The Taliban had threatened to kill Mastrogiacomo if they did not secure the release of some of their members held in Afghanistan. Mastrogiacomo's driver, Sayed Agha, was killed a few days earlier, when a deadline for the release of the five Taliban members was not met. Mastrogiacomo is the second Italian journalist to be kidnapped in Afghanistan in recent months: photographer Gabriele Torsello was held for almost a month when captured in October last year. For more information visit www.ifj.org.



3. Pakistan TV station stormed

The Pakistan police force stormed private broadcaster *Geo TV* during public demonstrations in Islamabad on March 16. According to reports, police trashed equipment and furniture and smashed windows. Several media workers were allegedly hurt in the scuffle. President Musharraf apologised publicly, live on *Geo TV*, saying the culprits should be found and punished. Police stormed the station after *Geo TV* broadcast coverage of violent public protests against the dismissal of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, who was head of Pakistan's Supreme Court. See www.ifj.org for more information.

4. International safety and press freedom mission to Pakistan

An international safety and press freedom mission, led by the IFJ and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), was in Pakistan from February 21 to February 25, to meet with government officials and local journalists to discuss freedom of expression issues and the worsening safety environment. The mission, including IFJ President Christopher Warren, demanded action from the Pakistan government in response to the growing incidents of violence against journalists and the deteriorating press freedom situation. The four-day mission culminated with a press conference in Islamabad where an appeal was made to the Pakistani government to honour its promises to guarantee the security and rights of journalists. Contact ifj@ifj-asia.org for more.

5. Indo-Pak conflict summit New Delhi February 27

A media summit under the USIP-funded project, 'Bridging the Divides: Improving Relations between India and Pakistan' was held on February 27 in New Delhi. The summit provided a forum for around 34 senior journalists - including eight from Pakistan and two from Kashmir - to discuss media issues of mutual concern. The meeting was opened by IFJ Asia Director Jacqueline Park and moderated by IFJ President Christopher Warren, and included presentations from union leaders, editors and journalists on issues from journalist safety to conflict reporting. The IFJ project was implemented in India and Pakistan in partnership with the All India Newspaper Employees Federation (AINEF) in India and the PFUJ in Pakistan. Contact ifj@ifj-asia.org for more information.

6. Two-day conflict training in Delhi

Under the USIP-supported project "Bridging the Divides", the AINEF held a two-day conflict-training workshop in Delhi on February 25-26. Fifteen participants attended the workshops, conducted in English and Hindi, which followed trainings in Srinagar on November 23-24. Under the IFJ project, a train the trainer workshop was held in June/July 2006 in Pakistan to train a pool of Indian and Pakistani journalists in training techniques. These trainers then went on to deliver the two-day conflict journalism workshops. Contact ifj@ifj-asia.org for more information.

7. Sri Lanka mission releases press freedom report

The International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Sri Lanka released its final report on March 7 calling for action on press freedom restrictions and journalist safety. *Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression in Sri Lanka: The Struggle for Survival*, reported nine media worker deaths since August 2005 and numerous incidents of death threats, harassment and attacks. The mission also found there is also a culture of impunity, with perpetrators rarely prosecuted. Meanwhile, the escalation of fighting between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has restricted the free flow of information through the country and repressed the media. Read the full report at www.freemediasrilanka.org.



8. Sri Lankan newspaper targeted

The Sri Lankan government has continued its crusade against *Mawbima*, the Sinhalese-language weekly newspaper, by sealing the bank accounts of its publisher, Standard Newspaper Private Limited (SNPL), on March 13, effectively halting publication.

Earlier Dushantha Basnayake, financial director of SNPL, was arrested by the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) under new anti-terror legislation. Basnayake, 40, became the second person affiliated with the publication to be detained the laws when he was arrested on February 26. *Mawbima* journalist Munusamy Parameshawary, 23, has now spent over 100 days behind bars, despite no charges being filed against her. *Mawbima* has as a reputation for publishing stories critical of the government. Visit www.ifj-asia.org for more

9. IFJ Congress in Moscow

The 26th IFJ Congress will take place in Moscow from May 28 to June 2 of this year. The Congress, the largest representative gathering of journalists in the world, is held every three years, with the theme for this year's event set as *Making News for Democracy: Building Trust in Quality Journalism*. The total attendance is expected to be around 1,000. Additionally, a special one-day conference is scheduled prior to the opening of Congress titled *Challenging Impunity: the Global Campaign for Justice in Journalism* where an International Commission of Inquiry into Impunity in the Killing of Journalists in Russia will be launched. IFJ Asia affiliates are reminded the IFJ deadline for congress registrations is April 13. See www.ifj.org for more.

10. IFJ staff changes

After five years of valuable work for the IFJ defending press freedom and journalists' rights, IFJ Asia-Pacific projects director Emma Walters will leave the organisation at the beginning of April to take up a position at The University of Sydney. We wish Emma all the best with her future endeavours.

11. Latest South Asia protests

[Sri Lanka: Sri Lankan government seals bank accounts of *Mawbima* newspaper – 16/3/2007](#)

[Bangladesh: IFJ demands immediate investigation into death of a journalist in Bangladesh – 13/3/2007](#)

[Sri Lanka: IFJ says new report highlights dire situation for Sri Lankan media – 9/3/2007](#)

[Afghanistan: IFJ Rejects "Absurd" Spy Allegations and Demands Release of Italian Journalist Kidnapped in Afghanistan – 7/3/2007](#)

[Sri Lanka: Media executive held under anti-terror laws, as Parameshawary nears 100 days detention – 1/3/2007](#)

[Pakistan: IFJ-PFUJ mission calls for action in response to "crisis of safety" in Pakistan – 28/2/2007](#)

[Nepal: Journalists attacked and work destroyed in Nepal – 28/2/2007](#)

[Sri Lanka: Government comments "disturbing", and journalist still missing in Sri Lanka – 27/2/2007](#)

[Pakistan: IFJ-PFUJ Mission for Press Freedom and Journalist Safety in 23/2/2007](#)

[Pakistan: Relief at journalist's freedom as IFJ Pakistan mission begins – 22/2/2007](#)

[Afghanistan & Pakistan: IFJ concerned by affronts on press freedom in Pakistan and Afghanistan – 22/2/2007](#)

If SAMSUN members have any information on a press freedom violation, please make sure you immediately contact staff at IFJ Asia so action can be taken.

Jacqueline Park
Emma Walters
Pi James
IFJ Asia-Pacific
www.ifj-asia.org
ifj@ifj-asia.org



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

CHRISTOPHER WARREN
President
AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary

SAMSN Members

Afghan Independent Journalists' Union, Afghanistan
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
CEHURDES, Nepal
Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Pakistan
Pakistan Press Foundation, Pakistan
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