



**International  
Federation  
of Journalists**

**AIDAN WHITE**  
General Secretary  
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January 14, 2008

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 February 18, 2008. Your input is 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](mailto:ifj@ifj-asia.org)

### **What is SAMSN?**

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](http://www.ifj-asia.org/page/samsn.html)

Please distribute this bulletin widely amongst your colleagues in the media.

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#### **1. IFJ Representative joins Press Freedom Mission in Nepal**

The IFJ will join an international press freedom and freedom of expression mission to Nepal from January 13 to 17. The mission, organised by IFJ affiliate the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), will bring 15 international delegates together in Kathmandu to meet local political and civil society leaders, media organisations, different social groups and representatives of major international governments and donors. Key issues to be addressed include Nepal's political transition and recent constitutional crisis with relation to its impact on the media and freedom of expression. The problem of continuing violence against journalists and media workers in the country will also be assessed. The mission will focus on ensuring new laws deal adequately with freedom of expression and the media.

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#### **2. IFJ sends letter of concern to Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa**

IFJ General Secretary Aidan White sent a letter to Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa on January 10, expressing the IFJ's grave concern about the escalation of attacks against journalists in Sri Lanka. In the letter, the IFJ called upon President Rajapaksa to enforce the United Nations Security Council Resolution to Protect Journalists Reporting in War Zones and Crisis Areas, which was adopted by the UN Security Council in 2006.



The situation for journalists in Sri Lanka has been deteriorating since January 2, when the government formally withdrew from a ceasefire with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This situation is of great concern to the IFJ and its local affiliates. The IFJ has joined the Free Media Movement (FMM) to call for the prompt dismissal of Sri Lanka's Minister for Labour, Mervyn Silva, following several incidents where Dr Silva physically and verbally abused officials from the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC).

In one incident, Dr Silva assaulted SLRC's news director, TMG Chandrasekara, at the premises of Sri Lanka's main public television broadcaster on December 27, 2007. Reportedly, this assault was brought on because the Minister was annoyed that comments he had made at a rally were not broadcast. The FMM said that SLRC journalists and staff resisted Dr Silva's intimidation and abuse in a spontaneous demonstration of solidarity.

To read the letter, [click here](#).

### **3. Sri Lankan journalists receive death threats**

In a related case, three leading media personnel reported receiving death threats after becoming involved in covering the dispute between Chandrasekara and Dr Silva. The three journalists from MBC-TV and Radio network broadcast the incident which showed the Minister scuffling with journalists at the office of the SLRC. Shortly after, they lodged complaints with Maharagama police over the threats. In view of these well-documented prior instances of the Minister's abuses against media personnel, the IFJ and the FMM are concerned President Rajapaksa has not made any effort to discipline Dr Silva. In further related attacks, the FMM reports that an unknown gang failed in an attempt to abduct *Silumina* senior journalist and Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA) secretary Poddala Jayantha at his home on January 7. Other senior journalists, media activists and journalists' leaders, including SLWJA president Sanath Balasooriya and FMETU general secretary Dharmasiri Lankapeli, have received threats because of their involvement in condemning the SLRC incident.

For more information visit [www.ifj-asia.org](http://www.ifj-asia.org)

### **4. Pakistan Mission Report to be released**

The situation for journalists in Pakistan has deteriorated over the past year. A presidential decree in June 2007 gave the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulation Authority (PEMRA) the power to carry out anti-democratic actions such as halting broadcast transmissions and closing media offices. The media clampdown was consolidated when a state of emergency was announced on November 3 2007. While the state of emergency was lifted on December 15, the disputed media laws remain in place. The assassination of opposition politician and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on December 27 heightened tensions and plunged Pakistan and the region into an even direr situation.

In response to this worsening crisis, November 2007, the IFJ and SAMSUN organised an emergency mission to the country to investigate the situation and its impact on the media. The mission team comprised of Kanak Mani Dixit, a senior editor and publisher from Nepal; Huma Ali, the PFUJ's president; and Iqbal Khattak, a Peshawar-based correspondent and representative of Reporters sans Frontieres (Reporters without Borders). From November 19 to 22, the mission team conducted a series of discussions in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi with journalists, media owners, civil society representatives and government officials and also joined journalists at their protests at local press clubs. When the project was completed, the mission team devised a list of recommendations including: *Revoke amended laws and restore broadcasting rights, Devise independent code of ethics, Implement seventh wage award, Ensure fair allocation of advertising*



*budgets, Provide professional safety and security, and Maintain international support.* The full mission report will be available on the IFJ Asia-Pacific website this month.

For more information visit [www.ifj-asia.org](http://www.ifj-asia.org)

## 5. Building tolerance and unity through the media in Bangladesh

The IFJ is conducting four round table meetings with the media community in Bangladesh this month. These meetings will give local journalists' associations the opportunity to discuss tolerance in journalism and conflict sensitive reporting. They will also include a training component and presentations from senior journalists. The meetings will be held in Chittagong, Dhaka, Jessore and Rangpur, and involve Drik News, the Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum, Dhaka Reporters Unity, the Bangladesh Journalists Rights Forum, as well as other local groups. The IFJ will include the results of the meetings in a handbook on human rights and conflict reporting in Bangladesh.

For more information visit [www.ifj-asia.org](http://www.ifj-asia.org)

## 6. Journalist killed in bus attack in Afghanistan

Abdul Munir, a producer and presenter from Afghanistan Radio Television in Jawzjan (RTA-Jawzjan), was shot while he was travelling from Jawzjan to Mazar-e-Sharif, the capital of the Balkh province. Munir was killed on December 28 at 2:30am when the bus he was travelling in was attacked by a group of armed people at Temoral, close to Mazar-e-Sharif. The gunmen shelled and shot at the vehicle. According to the Afghanistan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA), Munir died on the way to hospital from severe bleeding as a result of a gunshot wound. The armed group escaped and a police investigation is under way. Munir had worked with RTA for 14 years. The IFJ has established a safety office in Kabul which, with the support of the European Commission, is continuing to monitor attacks against journalists in Afghanistan.

For more information, visit [www.ifj-asia.org](http://www.ifj-asia.org)

### Latest IFJ Asia-Pacific protests

[Sri Lanka: Letter to to President Rajapaksa - 10/01/2008](#)

[Sri Lanka: Worsening Conflict Puts All Journalists in Sri Lanka At Risk - 10/01/2008](#)

[Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka's Army Commander Denounces Journalists As Traitors - 07/01/2008](#)

[Afghanistan: Journalist Shot Dead in Bus Attack in Afghanistan - -3/01/2008](#)

[Sri Lanka: Sack Sri Lankan Minister for Assault on Media Personnel - 03/01/2008](#)

[Pakistan: IFJ Calls for Dialogue and Lifting of Pakistan's Anti-Media Laws 21/12/2007](#)

[Pakistan: Pakistan Parties Urged to Sign for Free Media - 18/12/2007](#)

[Pakistan: PEMRA Threatens Ban on Live Election Coverage in Pakistan - 12/12/2007](#)

[Afghanistan: Journalists Continue to Face Culture of Impunity in Afghanistan - 11/12/2007](#)

[Nepal: Police Attack Journalist In Nepal - 11/12/2007](#)

[Pakistan: Pakistan Journalists Demand Respect for Human Rights - 10/12/2007](#)

[Pakistan: Pakistan High Court keeps GEO-TV off air - 05/12/2007](#)

[Pakistan: IFJ condemns attempt to silence Pakistan unions - 03/12/2007](#)

[Sri Lanka : Air Strike on Radio Station Condemned - 28/11/2007](#)

[Pakistan: PFUJ steps up battle for media freedom - 27/11/2007](#)

[Nepal: Nepali journalist abducted, beaten and threatened - 27/11/2007](#)



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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.

**IFJ Staff**

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**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  
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