

State of Media in November-08

Month of November 08 was again harsh and heavy for media persons like black Saturday of November 07, when media of Pakistan faced worst ever hostility of its history since its inception. National media organizations observed 3rd Nov 08 as black day to condemn the acts of a dictator who declared emergency because free role of media for reporting the voice against illegitimacy of army chief cum president. In words of renowned journalist Najim Sethi, "media was again in Ketcahery in month of November08".

In month, two working journalists lost lives due to professional duties. On Nov 03, Royal TV reporter Abdul Razzak Johra was murdered in Mianwali Punjab, in connection to his reporting on drug-related crimes.

Qari Mohammad Shoaib, a reporter for the Azadi and Khabar Kar newspapers, was shot dead by security forces in Mingora in the north-western Swat valley.

Downsizing in electronic and print media organizations and implementation of 7th wage board award were the main features of journalists' protest as media unions vocally protested against downsizing and continuous incidents of intimidations. Journalists protested against the sackings of hundreds of journalists from newspapers and private television stations, and the abolition of employment contracts. A great dismay was observed in dismissal of Shahzad Hussain Butt, senior reporter of the Aaj Kal Urdu newspaper in Lahore, for reasons directly connected with his activities as president of the Punjab Union of Journalists (PUJ).

Near Peshawar, Japanese news correspondent Motoki Yotsukura, the Pakistan bureau chief of Japanese newspaper Asahi Shimbun, and Afghan facilitator, Sami Yusufzai, a correspondent for Newsweek were attacked. They were returning from the Khyber region bordering Afghanistan after interviewing insurgents when a car of armed men tried to kidnap, in failure both were injured by firing.

Blockage of transmission of two channels Geo TV and ARY was remained clueless in Karachi and some parts of Sindh. Cable operators stopped the transmission of two private channels. Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) said it had taken serious notice of 'suspension of the distribution' of its licensed channels, Geo News and ARY ONE World, on cable TV networks in Karachi and some areas of Interior Sindh. Waqt TV claimed the blockage of transmission in twin cities but government rejected the claims.

In incidents of harassments, Insar Abbasi issue was on top for his reporting. "Ansar Abbasi has also joined Jewish lobby" it was commented by parliamentary leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) in the Balochistan Assembly and Senior Minister Maulana Abdul Wasey as JUI is annoyed over exposing a land scam in which JUI leadership was bribed. JUI head Maulana Fazal ur Rehman filed defamation sued against Jang Editor in Chief, Shakil ur Rehman and Ansar Abbasi of The News.

Punjab governor Salamn Taseer was condemned as he badmouthed media, anchorpersons, said, "entire country had come under the clutches of the media, as "it does not let any government work smoothly." He went on to say that anchorpersons of these TV channels think of themselves as some godly figures. He said if they (TV anchorpersons) were in the West, they would have long been handcuffed and arrested."

A group of journalists was attacked by security forces as they were traveling to the town of Miramshah in the North Waziristan area in FATA; they were stopped and taken to an unknown site by a group of armed men for detention of few hours. In Peshawar, journalists strongly condemned constant threats to media persons from criminal groups and alleged militants. According to a news report, Tribal journalists are facing grave economic and security challenges because of their self-censorship for fear of direct threats from either the Taliban or the security forces.

There were reports from Peshawar (NWFP) about abduction of Khadija Abdul Qahar, a Canadian formerly known as Beverly Giesbrecht, who publishes a web-based magazine, www.jihadunspun.com.

A private TV channel Aaj's cameraman was tortured for covering alleged stealing of gas at a CNG station owned by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Mian Javed Lateef in the Bati chowk area of Sheikhpura.

In Peshawar, students, who were protesting against the death of their fellow in a road accident manhandled a photographer of Daily Times Peshawar Bureau Zafar Goraya and tried to snatch his camera when he was taking photographs of their protest demonstration.

Sindh government 'conditionally' withdrew ban on Daily Islam. According to notification, Daily Islam will not publish any material that can incite for Jihad, promote terrorism or anti-state activities.

The Quetta office of Daily Times and Urdu daily Aaj Kal, received a letter threatening the newspaper group to "prepare for the worst" for not giving "deserving coverage" to the activities of Baloch 'freedom fighters' and serving the interests of the 'Punjabi establishment'.

Muhammad Shakeel a local journalist in Chakwal was beaten up by three persons for reporting the news of "Gambling" in his paper.

In Dina, district Jhelum, Journalist Nisaar Ahmad Mughal kidnapped by unknown persons on gun point and released after some time. Dina Police registered FIR lodged by Nisaar. Journalist Malik Ayaz Khokar was attack in Gilani Town in the vicinity of Cantonment Police Station, D.I Khan. Rawalpindi police registered a case against unknown callers for threatening Chief Reporter of Aaj Kal Raza Tabbasum. Journalists and Cameramen of News Channels manhandled by doctors and police during the protest of Nurses of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Rawalpindi. In Gilgit, journalist, Zulfiqar Ali, was served with a notice by district council member Raja Shehbaz after he tried to expose some deals he had allegedly made under the table.

Senate body shuts media out as "The committee chairperson, contrary to her previous stance, has ordered barring media people from covering the proceedings. The committee would merely issue a communication through official channels." Journalists boycotted the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) meeting and submitted a written complaint to the acting President Dr Fehmida Mirza. Pakistani Journalists attended Foreign Minister's conference with black strips in their hands to show their anger over bad-mannered by diplomats of Pakistan Embassy in New York. The change of guard following the general elections has seen the Ministry of Women's Development (MoWD) bolting its doors to the media with no official willing to speak on crucial matters.

Six-month-old bitter tug of war between Sherry Rehman and Dr Shahid Masood came to an end after President Asif Zardari decided to accept the resignation of Dr. Shahid but made him a special assistant to the prime minister. Dr Shahid Masud, however, before leaving the charge, moved a contempt of court petition in the Islamabad High Court against those who had shown a rare show of power in the PTV headquarters last week when Deputy MD Shahid Mahmood Nadeem, sacked by Dr Masood, was forcefully made to sit in his office.

A day after Dr Shahid Masood' resignation, Shahid Nadeem took the charge of deputy managing director of the state-run television channel.

Mahmood Haroon, the Chairman of Pakistan Herald Publication (Pvt) Ltd died in Karachi.