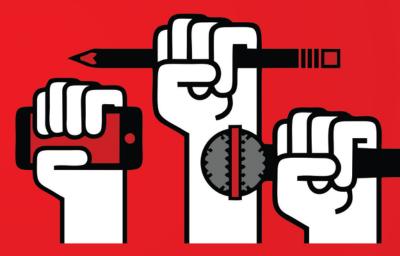Aurangzaib Khan on **Attacks on Media**
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STATE OF MEDIA IN PAKISTAN
Key Trends of 2014 and Main Challenges in 2015

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FREEDOM NETWORK, Pakistan – Context, Rationale and Mission Framework

Why Freedom Network?

The first generation of contemporary media reforms in Pakistan, starting in 2002 when the airwaves were opened up for private ownership, brought about increase in media space (TV channels going up from 1 to over 100 and radio stations from 1 to more than 150 by the start of 2015), increase in the number of media practitioners (from 2,000 journalists in 2002 to over 18,000) and increase in media pluralism (multi-national, multi-linguist, multi-ethnic media).

The second generation reforms are only now setting in with the emphasis of media evolution shifting from quantity to quality. Hence the general realization that carving out niches (as opposed to cloning oneself after the next media organization) and developing thematic expertise is growing within the media sector. This comes in the backdrop of a general slide into tabloidization that largely stems from inexperience as the average age of journalists has slumped from about 47 in 2002 to around 23 now. This has meant that journalists pay less attention to ethics and take more risks, and as a consequence face a myriad array of risks to their lives and work.

Exercising freedom of expression amidst violence

The rise of terrorism in Pakistan during the past decade has made the country one of the most dangerous countries on the planet to not just practice journalism but also to exercise the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights to freedom of expression and access to information. Over 100 journalists and media workers have been killed in the line of duty in Pakistan since 2000 and over 2,000 injured, kidnapped, arrested or harassed and intimidated in the same period. In the same period, over 55,000 civilians have been killed in terrorism and violence perpetrated by extremists and militants seeking a totalitarian society with dozens of human rights defenders also target killed for exercising the right to free expression by differing with the agenda of extremism.

There has been a lot of talk about how to reduce the risk to human rights defenders, journalists and development practitioners in Pakistan to make defending human rights and practicing journalism safer professions. However there are no training institutes in Pakistan or educational centers that can educate and train both human rights defenders and journalists in ethics and on techniques in keeping safe from harm. While there are some organizations in Pakistan that conduct some trainings for media but these are neither enough to cater to the needs of 18,000 journalists in Pakistan or thousands of human rights defenders in the development sector nor have the orientation, experience, exposure or capacity to undertake an exhaustive mandate to serve the needs of journalists and human rights defenders even as the media sector is rapidly evolving and the political transition taking place to a more democratic polity.

Defending the defenders of public interests
Under these circumstances, it is imperative to:

a. Improve capacity of journalists and human rights defenders to practice safe work;
b. Raise general awareness among the civil society about risks facing human rights defenders and journalists; and
c. Establish and strengthen capacities to educate and train development sector practitioners, human rights defenders and journalists to become more professional

It was in this backdrop that it **Freedom Network** was established in 2013 – an independent initiative in Pakistan to establish a platform for civil society, including media, dedicated to providing research, analysis, guidance, resources, education and training so that human rights defenders, development practitioners and media practitioners can do their job well.

In view of the changing dynamics of political transition, development agendas and rapid media evolution in Pakistan, **Freedom Network** seeks to serve as an independent watchdog to monitor and protect interests of civil society, development sector and media such as protecting the rights to freedom of expression and access to information, advocating for more representative laws for an enabling environment for development and media practitioners, training human rights defenders and journalists to be more professional, responsible and ethical and educating them to operate safely and securely in conflict and hostile environments in the country.

Freedom Network – A Brief Institutional Profile
Freedom Network is a Pakistan-based media and development sector watchdog registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) in 2013. The organization's core value is to protect freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and Internet, and access to information and promote an informed society that sees media as a key partner in a democratic and pluralist Pakistan. It has the following mandate:

1. **To serve as a watchdog on the right to freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and Internet and of civil society**
   a. Through 24/7 monitoring of the rights to freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and online
   b. Through monitoring and documenting violations of freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and Internet
   c. Through researching the causes, symptoms and case studies of the violations of freedom of expression in all forms of media
   d. Through monitoring violation of the right to expression of non-media sections of society such as human rights groups, development practitioners, and the performing arts industry.

2. **To promote an ethical and professional media**
   a. By promoting, supporting and conducting advocacy, research, analysis and training initiatives for media
   b. By promoting, supporting and conducting initiatives to help civil society strengthen its stakeholding in a pluralistic, independent, open and professional media with emphasis on professional ethics and journalism best practices

c. By strengthening the interface between media and civil society by improving professional development communications within and for development sector organizations as well as for their supporters and donors

d. By promoting a culture of safety and security for journalists and media houses through advocacy, research and training on issues of safety and impunity against journalists

3. **To serve as an advocate for freedom of expression and access to information as fundamental rights**
   a. Through a broad range of advocacy, research and analysis initiatives
   b. By promoting and building synergies between and among media and civil society stakeholders
   c. By promoting citizens' participation on issues relating to freedom of expression and access to information
   d. By conducting assessment missions, studies, research, translations of resources in multiple languages on its own and for other organizations for wider national and international audiences

Chapter 1: ATTACKS ON MEDIA

Chronicles of Shame: Violations against Pakistani media and journalists in 2014

By Aurangzaib Khan

The media in Pakistan has been under persistent attacks from a variety of quarters – including both state and non-state actors – over the past decade as the country transitioned first from military rule to representative dispensations and then consolidation of democracy. In the same period, a rise in extremism, violence and terrorism has deeply impacted society. Over 55,000 Pakistanis have been killed by terrorism. This includes over 100 journalists – the highest number in any single country for this period, aiding the country being ranked among the most dangerous on the planet to practice journalism.

The Year 2014 was not just no different from recent years, it was the deadliest ever for the media in Pakistan's history. According to monitoring and analysis, conducted by Freedom Network, of violations against media in Pakistan in 2014, the following are, in brief, the cases documented:

Journalists, media assistants and bloggers killed in Pakistan in 2014: Total 14

Of these 4 were killed in Balochistan, 4 in Punjab, 2 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 1 in Sindh.

*Reporters***:** Shan Odho, Bakhtaj Ali, Ibrar Tanoli, Ijaz Mengal, Shehzad Iqbal, Nadeem Haider, Yaqoob Shehzad, Irshad Mastoi, Abdul Rasool and Jewan Arain.

*Media assistants***:** Driver Khalid, Technician Waqas, Guard Ashraf and Accountant Younas.

Citizen journalist: Blogger Ali Raza Khawaja

Journalists and media assistants shot at and wounded in 2014: Total 4

Journalists kidnapped in 2014: Total 2

Oct 24: Tribal journalist Amirzada Wasal from Jamrud tehsil of Khyber agency in FATA bordering Peshawar missing since this date from Ghunai area of Jamrud. He was still missing at the end of 2014.

Nov 7: Dera Bugti-based journalist Manzoor Ahmed Bugti goes missing from Quetta in Balochistan missing since this date. He was still missing at the end of 2014.

Journalists detained in 2014: Total 3

Journalists and media assistants attacked, threatened or harassed in 2014: Total 58

Female journalists attacked, threatened or harassed in 2014: Total 6

Foreign journalists expelled from Pakistan in 2014: Total 3

Media houses threatened or attacked in 2014: Total 7

Forced censorship cases in 2014: Total 9
These cases include setting newspapers on fire, taking channels off air and stopping distribution of newspapers, attack on cable networks, etc.

Cases registered against media practitioners and owners in 2014: Total 4

TV channels suspended from broadcast in 2014: Total 3

Threat actors: Some of the identified forces that attacked, threatened or harassed media during 2014:
Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Ahle Sunnat Wal Jumaat (ASWJ), Baloch National Army (BNA), Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), Islamabad Police, Peshawar Police, Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), Balochistan National Party (BNP), Baloch Students Organization (BSO) and Punjab Police

Five most serious cases of attacks on media in 2014:

Hamid Mir: Senior anchorperson for Geo News TV channel. He was attacked on April 19, 2014 minutes after landing in Karachi from Islamabad. He was shot at and received six bullets in his body. He was operated upon to remove four bullets while two still remained inside his body by the end of the year. The journalist's family charged intelligence agency ISI chief Lt Gen Zaheerul Islam of masterminding the attack.

Irshad Mastoi: Bureau chief of Online news agency and assignment editor of ARY News TV channel. He was shot dead in his office in Quetta along with young Abdul Rasool, reporter, and Muhammad Younas, office accountant, by unidentified gunmen on August 28, 2014.

Raza Rumi: Political analyst, writer and TV anchor. He was attacked by unidentified gunmen in Lahore on March 28, 2014 as he driving home after conducting his TV show. While Rumi manage to survive, his driver, Mustafa, later succumbed to his wounds in a hospital while another guard sustained injuries.

Geo News TV: A well-organized campaign was launched to malign and punish Geo News channel after its prime talk-show host Hamid Mir was attacked in Karachi. The military, appearing extremely unhappy at the allegation by Mir and his channel that ISI masterminded the attack, got the channel banned for one month and fined Rs10 million for treason and also banned the channel in cantonment areas since then. Geo channel's staff and vans were repeatedly attacked.

Express News TV: The channel has been targeted repeatedly in recent time. These attacks beginning in 2013 continued in 2014. Its Peshawar bureau chief Jamshed Bhagwan was thrice attacked when bombs were planted outside his residence. Three of the channel's staffers were gunned down in Karachi with Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan dramatically calling live on one of its programs claiming responsibility for the attacks.

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Chapter 2: MEDIA INSECURITIES

Pakistan's failing battle to combat impunity against journalists and growing hostile working conditions for media practitioners

A round-up of threats against media and attacks against journalists in Pakistan in 2014

By Iqbal Khattak

Media in Pakistan continued to operate under increasingly threatening and insecure conditions in 2014 with the year emerging as the bloodiest for journalists in the country's history. Ten journalists, four media assistants and one blogger were killed in 2014 and scores others, including female journalists, routinely threatened, intimidated and harassed all over the country amid thinly veiled attempts by several quarters top browbeat the media into silence.

The otherwise generally safer Punjab caught up with violent Balochistan – four scribes were killed in each of these two provinces – while two were murdered in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one in Sindh. No journalist was killed in violent Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) although the region remained hostile and unsympathetic for journalists where they were intimidated by both state and non-state actors in 2014. Some murder attacks clearly relate to the professional work of these slain journalists while some warrant in-depth investigations to establish whether the motive for attacks on them was other than their profession.

Among those who were not killed, a record documented number of journalists – 58 – were intensely threatened, intimidated and harassed. The forces involved in these actions included, as documented and outlined by the journalists, the state, political parties, banned militant groups, terrorists groups like Taliban, and insurgent groups. Among the threatened, intimidated and harassed journalists included six female reporters and newscasters too in 2014. The number may be higher than what has been recorded as there is no centralized monitoring mechanism at the government level nor are journalists adequately trained to document each threat they receive.

A key, and troubling, trend on the issue of impunity – freedom from punishment for attackers – in 2014 was that the enemies of free press got not just stronger in Pakistan but no longer remained unknown. Some of them did not hide their faces and went online to take responsibility for one attack or another on media house and journalists busy for investigating various acts of omission or commission by both state and non-state actors.

It is clear that in Pakistan media houses and journalists trying to report on grey areas of the security and political realms are under attack. None of this is exemplified better than the fact that Pakistan is the only country where a journalist – Hamid Mir – practices journalism with two bullets in his body. He was attacked on April 19, 2014, and shot six times. His

family blamed the country's premier intelligence agency ISI as being "behind the attack." Mir, and his employer Geo News TV channel, spent the most of the year trying to recover from disproportionately high punitive action from the security establishment for being named as the attacker. By the end of 2014, Mir was back at his job with two of the six bullets still lodged in his body. While his attackers haven't been traced, indicted, convicted or punished, Mir's tenacity in going back to duty in the face of continuing impunity for his attackers also exemplifies the courage of Pakistani journalists.

Another high-profile case of an attack on a journalist was writer and TV talk show anchor Raza Rumi who was confronted for his views on minority rights and for challenging groups involved in sectarian violence in the country. He survived an assassination attempt in Lahore, provincial capital of Punjab province. While he survived, his driver was killed. "Extremists want no counter narrative in the state that is why they are attacking alternative voices," Rumi told *AFP* after the attack.

Express News TV channel was targeted more than one occasion for taking up minority communities' plight. The persistent attacks aimed to force a change in the channel's editorial policy towards the same issue, as revealed in detail by former employee Neha Ansari in an article in Foreign Policy magazine.

Enforced censorship was a new dimension to the pattern of attacks on free press in Pakistan in 2014 besides proactive self-censorship by journalists and media houses to stay safe in the face of unabated and unchallenged multiple attacks against media. After aggressively being denied distribution through cable network in most parts of the country with support of the security establishment, Geo News managed to stage a comeback in late 2014 but continued to be put off the cable network in the country's cantonment areas where the Jang Group's English and Urdu publications were also banned after the allegation that ISI chief was behind the attack on Mir. Some other TV channels, such as ARY News, were also taken off cable network and newspaper deliveries were disrupted in several parts of the country to measures of dictating terms and change in news agendas.

The media scene in Balochistan did not change for the better in 2014 and continued in the vein of the past several years where journalists have been hounded by both state and non-state actors, finding themselves caught in the middle of an insurgency that has proven dangerous for them to report. This despite the provincial government's expression of solidarity with media after three journalists and a media assistant were gunned down in the province in 2014. The killing of young Irshad Mastoi right in his office chair in Quetta was a chilling reminder that the enemies of free press continue to act with impunity. Dera Bugti-based Baloch journalist Manzoor Bugti, working for Pakistan Television, remained unaccounted for since he disappeared in Quetta on November 7, 2014.

The region of FATA was quieter in 2014 in terms of fatal casualties for media despite an escalation of hostilities between the security establishment and terror groups. The fact is that conditions to practice journalism in this region remain extremely challenging. Journalists are routinely restricted from movement in large swathes of the tribal areas. Embedded journalism seems to be the dominant form of journalism with the military's public affairs wing – ISPR – now and then airlifting hand-picked mediapersons for access to

restricted areas for selective coverage of military operations. Since the attack on Hamid Mir, journalists working with Geo News or Jang Group publications are routinely kept out of any official briefing on military operations or arranged trip to tribal areas.

Any state promises of assistance with combating impunity against journalists remain mere lip service. A three-member judicial commission comprising judges of apex court has been meeting since the government announced its setting up on April 20, 2014, to probe the attack on Mir. The commission was mandated to submit its report within three weeks. However, it was given additional periods to complete the probe. But the probe is taking longer than expected time and the journalist community is becoming impatient to read the findings. By the end of 2014 there were no indications the report would be made public.

Growing intolerance for a critical media was an added worry for journalists. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Imran Khan used public meetings to launch repeated tirades against Jang Group and its owner, prompting party supporters and activists to target journalists working with the group. Khan's party cadres repeatedly attacked and thrashed several of its journalists including some female journalists. Self-exiled politico Altaf Hussain of Muttahida Qaumi Movement also used public meeting to demand that TV channels should air his telephonic addresses live to his supporters.

Blogger Ali Raza Khawaja's murder remains a mystery. He was shot dead in Karachi where attacks are so sophisticated one may not reach a conclusion to point an accusing finger at any group or individual for press freedom violations.

Challenges of combating impunity and creating a safer environment for journalists in Pakistan in 2015

The biggest challenge for media in Pakistan in 2015 will be to forge a consensus between the government and the media sector on a roadmap for media safety to engender a safer environment for journalism by arresting the tide of over 100 journalists killed in the country over the last decade. This can only be demonstrated through the establishment of a credible and effective mechanism, in tandem with the government, to combat impunity. This will entail measures ranging from drafting and passing special laws on media safety at the federal and provincial levels, as well as appointment of special prosecutors at the federal and provincial levels to investigate attacks against journalists and media as and when they happen. Another challenge will be creating a commission to restore confidence in the state's ability to provide justice to the families, colleagues and media houses of over 100 journalists killed so far by tracing, indicting, convicting and punishing their killers, as well as providing legal and medical assistance, to journalists attacked.

The government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 2014 made several promises and took some small measures to combat impunity against journalists and intimidation of media by various quarters but nothing concrete came out of it. In 2015, it will have another opportunity to come good on its promises. Media stakeholders, including representatives of media owners, working journalists, and national and international media support organizations using the platform of Pakistan Coalition on Media Safety (PCOMS), will have to provide the requisite technical assistance to the government so that Pakistan can address

the journalists' safety and security issues and the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on Impunity and Issues of Safety of which Pakistan is one of five pilot countries where it is to be implemented.

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Chapter 3: MEDIA SAFETY

Safer Environment for Journalists and Journalism: Roadmap for Media Safety in Pakistan

Key findings of the state of media safety in Pakistan in 2014 through a mapping of the UN Journalist Safety Indicators and recommendations for collaborative approaches to safety in 2015

By Adnan Rehmat

Pakistan has over the past decade been consisted ranked by leading media watchdog groups such as Reporters Sans Frontiers, Committee to Protect Journalists and International Federation of Journalists, as one of the most dangerous countries to practice journalism. The figures bear this out. Over 100 journalists killed since 2000 and over 2,000 injured, arrested, kidnapped and harassed in the same period.

In 2013, Pakistan was selected as one of five pilot countries for implementation of the UN Action Plan on Journalists' Safety and Issues of Impunity, which among other things required a detailed mapping of the state of media safety in the country through a set of about 150 Journalists Safety Indicators (JSIs) and recommendations for collaborative action among government, media industry, media workers, media support groups, parliament and political parties and civil society. Over the course of 2013-14 a detailed mapping of JSIs was undertaken by Pakistan-based research and advocacy organization IRADA with financial and technical assistance of UNESCO and Open Society Foundation. The author of this article was the lead researcher on this effort.

The JSIs Pakistan report came up with over 150 findings and more than 300 recommendations for a national roadmap on media safety and collaborative approaches to combating impunity against journalists in Pakistan. The following are key findings from 2014 and recommendations for actions in 2015 to engender a safer environment for journalists and journalism in Pakistan:

Key finding #1

❖ The **practice of journalism is not pegged to safety of journalists** forcing them to assume unnecessary risks in the absence of mandatory guidelines aimed at pre-emption. Media organizations generally don't have specific security policies, protocols, procedures and practices in place that aim at reducing the risks to journalists. There is an absence of security mechanisms that can aid prevention and curtailment of risks. Instead media houses merely adopt arbitrarily responses to individual cases of attacks.

Recommendations:

❖ *1a:* Promote and facilitate **direct dialogue** between the key media industry stakeholders such as media owners and working journalists, and federal and provincial governments, including information, law and justice ministries and departments, and their security agencies such interior ministry, home departments and military media wings, to raise awareness about the security concerns facing media. The Pakistan Coalition on Media Safety (PCOMS) can be the facilitative platform for this dialogue.

❖ *1b:* Facilitate **drafting of bills on safety for journalists and media workers, both at the federal and provincial levels**, which assist in identifying rights of the media sector and duty bearers of the State that can ensure those rights through pre-emption and responsive measures to reduce risks for journalists and create mechanisms to facilitate legal recourse in proactively combating impunity. PCOMS can be a key platform to facilitate this legislative initiative through engagement with the legislatures and legislators by serving as a bridge between the media industry and the State.

Key finding #2

❖ There is **no governmental strategy in place**, either at the federal or provincial levels, which identifies targets and role-players responsible for monitoring, analyzing and responding to issues of safety and security of journalists.

Recommendation:

❖ *2a:* Both the federal and provincial governments should **establish a cell and an attendant mechanism**, preferably at the information ministry and departments, to serve as the focal platform to engage with media stakeholders and coordinate with the various role-players responsible for monitoring, analyzing and responding to issues of safety and security of journalists. PCOMS can serve as the principal multi-stakeholder platform that can coordinate on the issue of journalists' safety with the governments.

Key finding #3

❖ No Pakistani law explicitly deals with or guarantees safety of journalists. The safety of journalists is indirectly dealt with rights and laws guaranteeing safety and security of citizens. Therefore, **the State recognizes the attacks on safety of journalists including citizen journalists under the criminal law only**. Usually the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) is used to entertain cases of attacks against journalists. A bill on safety of journalists has been languishing in parliamentary committees for review and inputs for well nearly two years by mid-2014.

Recommendations:

❖ *3a:* Considering the high degree of violence and impunity against journalists in Pakistan, key Pakistani and international media support groups and alliances,

including Pakistan Media Safety Consortium (PMSC), PCOMS and Pakistan Journalists Safety Fund (PJSF) should, in tandem with relevant legal experts **draft a model law on safety of journalists** for consideration of the federal and provincial governments for enactment.

- ❖ *3b:* The PCOMS should **spearhead engagement** of federal and provincial, legislators and political parties, particularly the standing committees on information in the legislatures, and lobbying for tabling and enactment of the proposed draft model law on safety of journalists.

Key finding #4

- ❖ The Pakistani State has **no explicit policies**, either federally or provincially, outlining protection measures for journalists or media houses, offline or online, or allocation of specified resources and expertise promising institutionalized support to media practitioners attacked or in distress.

Recommendations:

- ❖ *4a:* PCOMS should engage the federal and provincial governments in a series of dialogues and consultation on **drafting, approval and implementation of a specific policy on safety of journalists**, which outlines mechanisms of ensuring security of journalists and resources to appropriately compensate for distress in the line of duty. Such a policy should actively encourage institutionalized partnerships between the federal / provincial governments and representative associations of media owners and media workers, plus media support groups, to make such a policy broad-based with multi-stakeholder ownership and division of responsibility.

- ❖ *4b:* The PCOMS should spearhead engagement of federal and provincial, legislators and political parties, particularly the standing committees on information in the legislatures, and lobbying for **tabling and enactment of the proposed draft model** law on safety of journalists.

- ❖ *4c:* PJSF, which is an effective and successful but limited mechanism to support journalists in distress, should be **strengthened and partnerships** between it and the federal and provincial governments, as well as PCOMS, should be encouraged to make it the default mechanism for helping journalists with financial, medical and legal aid to journalists and their families in distress.

Key finding #5

- ❖ The federal government in November 2013 announced at a UNESCO conference in Islamabad that **Pakistan endorses the UN Plan of Action on Impunity against Journalists** that has listed Pakistan as one of the five pilot countries in which it is being implemented. Federal Information and Broadcast Minister Senator Pervaiz Rasheed announced that the federal government is ready to support the implementation of the UN Action Plan through policy and resource support.

However, there is no mechanism in place that can help the government meet its commitments.

Recommendation:

- ❖ *5a:* PCOMS should engage the federal government on discussing and strategizing with it the implementation of the latter's publicly endorsed UN Action Plan on Impunity against Journalists. This should be linked with similarly proposed activities between these two parties on helping draft a formal government policy on media safety, including a new law on safety of journalists in Pakistan. PCOMS should **seek follow-up steps** by the government on the commitments made by the government.

Key finding #6

- ❖ The Pakistani State does **not have specific institutions** dedicated to investigations, prosecutions, protection and compensation in regard to the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity. However, some new developments took place in 2014 that can be considered as significant moves on the part of the government authorities in Pakistan – both at the federal and provincial levels – to concretize steps for welfare of journalists, as well as to map out measures that can help in reducing impunity against them.

    -Federal Government: Established a committee comprising federal information and interior ministers to, among other things, propose in consultation with representatives of journalists and media houses a set of recommendations on providing (i) Legal assistance to journalists in distress, and (ii) Compensation for journalists injured or killed in line of duty.

    -Balochistan Government: Announced a judicial commission to investigate the killings of journalists in the troubled southwest province since 2010 and a committee to work out a compensation regime for journalists killed or attacked in line of duty.

    -Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government: Enacted the Journalists Welfare Endowment Fund Act 2014 mandating the government to take the lead in assuming responsibility to help journalists in distress in the jurisdiction of the province. It promises a fund that will pay Rs1 million payment to the family of any journalist killed in an act of terrorism.

    -Sindh Government: Announced a plot of land free of charge to the heirs of every journalist killed in the province in line of duty and to partially contribute to health insurance cover scheme for journalists in Sindh. Also announced an 'endowment fund' for journalists to help them meet financial needs, including those related to fighting various pressures including attacks on journalists and victimization of media groups.

Recommendations:

❖ *6a:* The federal and provincial governments have taken initial steps that conceptually acknowledge their responsibility and commitment to helping journalists in distress and getting justice for those killed or harmed. However, these are not part of any formal policy on media safety and not even in written forms. Representative alliances working on media issues such as PCOMS and PJSF need to immediately **engage these governments in helping then codify these decisions in the shape of written policies, mechanisms and procedures to institutionalize them**.

❖ *6b:* PCOMS and PJSF should **provide technical assistance** to the federal and provincial in governments in **institutionalizing the proposed governmental assistance mechanisms and operationalize these mechanisms** through formal partnerships between them and the governments.

❖ *6c:* The media safety and assistance measures provided by the various governments vary in their respective scopes, scales and systems. PCMOS and PJSF should lobby with and provide technical assistance to the governments to **bring uniformity in both the scale and scope of the proposed assistance** but also in the eventual assistance delivery systems and mechanisms.

Key finding #7

❖ The Pakistani State does not, either at the federal or provincial levels, have adequate mechanisms, including specific institutions, programs and budgets, in place for monitoring and reporting upon threats, harassment and violence towards journalists – including arbitrary arrest, torture, threats to life and killing. **Any support that is forthcoming from government authorities is arbitrary**. Some commitments have been made by the federal and some of the provincial governments in 2013 and 2014 about their willingness to offer administrative and other resource support but this has been absent despite increasing cases of attacks against journalists and media houses.

Recommendations:

❖ *7a:* The absence of a formal policy on media safety has hampered implementation of the willingness and commitments on assistance measures and resources by the federal and provincial governments for journalists. PCOMS should **provide technical assistance to the governments to draft and enact such policies**. These policies should outline the attendant implementation mechanisms, procedures and regulations.

❖ *7b:* Considering the high levels of violence and impunity against journalists in Pakistan — a sub-committee set up by PCOMS in March 2014 to recommend measures to provide justice to these journalists, proposed the **appointment of special prosecutors with special offices, staff and budgetary allocations** dedicated to proactively investigating attacks on journalists as soon as they happen. PCOMS has already endorsed these recommendations, which also suggest that the prosecutors simultaneously investigate the over 100 unsolved cases of journalists

killed and pursue these cases in courts. PCOMS should immediately start lobbying with the federal and provincial governments to appoint these prosecutors and establish their offices, staffs and allocate appropriate budgets to combat impunity against journalists.

❖ *7c:* PCOMS should help **draft a model law on safety of journalists** through relevant legal experts and necessary consultations with stakeholders, and lobby with the federal and provincial governments to present the bill in the legislatures for enactment.

❖ *7d:* A sub-committee set up by PCOMS in March 2014 to consult and recommend a set of proposed **safety protocols that media houses could endorse and adopt**. These safety protocols, aimed at using preventive and pre-emptive measures to reduce risks for journalists, should be endorsed and adopted by the media houses. Endorsed by PCOMS, the PCOMS should actively lobby to get these implemented.

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Chapter 4: MEDIA ETHICS

Crisis of credibility: Blatant disregard for ethics makes professionalism prime casualty of Pakistani media

A round-up of trends and impact of the plummeting ethical standards of media in 2014

By Haroon Rashid

When it comes to ethics, Pakistani media in general has over the years made it a habit to learn only from its mistakes – it has mostly opted for "pay as you go" policy. Pre-emption is hardly a priority. The year 2014 was no different, if not one of the worst in the context of ethics. Some from Geo News TV channel's hysterical coverage of the vicious attack on its best-known journalist Hamid Mir to coverage of protest marches and political sit-ins left much to be desired.

The April 19, 2014, gun attack on Mir seems triggered hitherto latent business rivalries among media groups and TV channels into nasty catcalling and charges and countercharges of treason, setting off a divisive media battle that only became uglier as the months passed. Competing channels used the opportunity to batter the market leader Geo and question Mir's motives — one station even suggested he engineered the shooting that pumped six bullets in his body as a publicity stunt. His brother, Amir, himself a journalist, accused the ISI and its chief of orchestrating the shooting in an emotional denunciation that was broadcast for several hours live on Geo, often against a backdrop of a photo of ISI chief General Zaheerul Islam. Even staunch ISI critics thought the channel's specified attacks singling out Islam as the architect were one-sided, rushed and impulsive.

Geo News' entertainment channel Geo Entertainment soon fell found itself embroiled in another serious controversy. Its popular morning show was blemished by accusations of blasphemy. Both channels were ultimately banned for a while and fined punitively. This was a first in Pakistan's media history. The security establishment covertly made sure that the two channels suffer for whatever they had done by being the official petitioner against them with private broadcast sector regulator PEMRA.

By this time several other channels had become embroiled in the accusations game, dispensing even the pretentions of ethics, neutrality and fairness, their mutual warring over rankings in this public fight becoming stark. Querulous media barons found the opportunity to bash each other, especially Geo News. Abbas Nasir, former editor of Dawn newspaper and BBC, told Freedom Network: "Both lack of understanding of ethical issues and also ignoring in some cases where they know better. Their key driver is revenue."

2014 was also the year when another key player in the media landscape, the TV channel cable distributers also increasingly became a party to media conflicts. They openly influenced access to channels by continuously arbitrarily changing their numerical position number in the cable distribution network "in national interest."

Covert influences on the Newsrooms

In November 2014 came another bombshell from Neha Ansari, a researcher and former staffer of English language newspaper *The Express Tribune*. She wrote an article in the *Foreign Policy* magazine alleging the collusion of Pakistan's powerful military and the nation's media outlets. She said the military was using the media to add muscle and might to the anti-government movement led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party chief Imran Khan in an attempt to "cut Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif down to size."

She further wrote that "media groups in Pakistan are family-owned and make all decisions unilaterally — regardless of whether they concern marketing and finance or editorial content and policy — advancing their personal agendas through the influential mainstream outlets at their disposal. A majority of the CEOs and media house owners are businessmen, with no background (or interest) in the ethics of journalism. The owners and publishers make it very clear to their newsrooms and staff — including the editor — that any tilt or gloss they proscribe is non-negotiable."

Both material and anecdotal evidence indicates Neha is right since the notorious 'press advice' of yesteryears is still prevalent but in different shapes and hues. But if completely true, it shows the minute extent to which even next day's news leads are still decided not in newsrooms but somewhere else. Some senor journalists say that they are still reminded, though politely, that they should not be overcritical of the security establishment.

There was no official rebuttal of Neha's assertions, but on the internet the security related forums did speak out against it. In one place it said "yet another example of the continued 'media trial' with a specific objective of maligning, vilifying and ultimately discrediting Pakistan's most stable and evolved institutions. Her article which was mainly aimed at the international audience is a strange cocktail of fabricated facts, third party accounts of individuals who were not identified, personal, political or ideologically driven bias. She attempts to come off as the morally high flying champion of journalistic integrity inside an otherwise 'rotten' journalistic structure in Pakistan."

Patently partisan

The months-long anti-government protests in Islamabad brought to the fore several more ethical dilemmas for the media. Imran Khan's Tehreek-Insaf and Tahirul Qadri's Pakistan Awami Tehreek's long protest sit-ins in Islamabad and their coverage exposed the media's political inclinations. Observing the virtually round-the-clock live coverage for months on end, one could easily draw the conclusion which channel was supporting which political party. The channel owners were calling the shots. And the irony became stark that the role of professional editors and journalists became scarce due to their inability to take a stand against the owners.

In 2014, television news no doubt widened public debate on several key issues and exposed abuses by authorities and other interest groups, but it also came to face sharp criticism for its patently shoddy reporting more often than not. Most TV channels and current affairs anchors tried to become vested agenda-setters instead of public interest advocates. On

August 31, 2014, when supporters of Khan and Qadri had stormed the Parliament's gates, Mubashar Lucman, an anchor for ARY News TV channel, saluted the army during a live broadcast and invited the military to take over "and save the protesters and the country." Earlier on August 25, he welcomed the "sound of boots" (a reference to the military), as he had "no sympathy for corrupt politicians who have looted the country." This was blatant violation of media ethics.

Lucman also made repeated unverified claims on live TV that seven protesters had been killed by riot police in the ensuing clash. (It was reported by other news outlets that three people had died, one by accident.) Lucman came out with a number of secret videos showing corruption in the ruling party but hardly did he could prove them in any courts. Because of his questionable one-sided reporting, he though himself ended up facing several defamation cases in courts.

Another senior and respected anchorperson took the government's helicopter facility the next morning of arrival of marchers from Lahore to show their numbers were less than what the organizers had claimed. In an hour-long TV broadcast detailed shots of highways were shown but not for a single time, the anchor mentioned how he got the chopper and of course the footage.

TV channels also need to decide how much prime time a politician needs to get. Anchors and editors need to make an informed decision based on a politician's standing. A prime example is Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed of Awami Mulsim League, a party with only one member (himself) in the Parliament. No doubt he is an old hand at politics and a cheesy talker, but Pakistani audiences don't deserve to see him on channel every night espousing doomsday scenarios and outlandish and unverified allegations. A keen viewer complained to the regulatory authority PEMRA against him, arguing that Ahmed, who has been a member of National Assembly for at least five times, smokes cigars (even more lethal than cigarettes) throughout his talk shows and feels proud of it. The viewer asked that Ahmed must either strictly be asked NOT to smoke on his public appearances on TV channels or if this is not possible, all TV channels must be advised to display the warning 'Smoking Kills' whenever he is shown on TV with a cigar in his hand. This is an example of how audiences can demand a more ethical media.

But not all was wrong with the Pakistani media in 2014. A small but significant step came from *Dawn* newspaper which in keeping with the internationally recognized practice of ethical journalism, in August, it decided to have its own internal ombudsman to be called Dawn Readers' Editor (DRE). Before this only *The Express Tribune* newspaper had made an effort to address readers' concerns through an ombudsman. No other newspaper has so far set up any readers' complaint address mechanism.

The DRE will be the investigating authority to whom all clarifications, contradictions, corrections and complaints will be referred, and it is he who will take note of any alleged violations of Dawn's code of ethics, which is based on the internationally recognized journalistic values and ethics, and which have always been upheld and guarded by Dawn's team of media persons.

Ethical challenges and trends to look out for in Pakistani media in 2015

Like in 2014 and earlier, if left to the profit-centered media owners alone, Pakistani media will not become more ethical or professional in 2015. "They don't take sides on issues with this party or that on principles but for monetary gain or in expectation of gain. Also internal politics are partly responsible. A lot of score settling, as the Mirs of Geo were seen as arrogant and unapproachable. The Lakhanis of Express have a 30-year old grouse against Jang Group and ARY Group can change their policy or people on a single ISI call," Abbas Nasir says painting a bleak picture.

A key challenge in restoring the professionalism of media in 2015 will be to arrive at a unanimous code of conduct for the entire Pakistani media spectrum. Some media houses individually have a code of ethics but a joint one would create the critical mass of pressure needed to be self-accountable and to create a groundswell of serious ethical reforms in the sector. TV channels are seen as refusing a mechanism that could help them pre-empt and prevent ethical violations. The frustration in framing a media code of ethics was reflected in a remark by Interior Minister Nisar Ali wherein he said: "This [code] might only be completed before Judgment Day. But the government is thinking of devising its own laws to stop media from making militants heroes." That would not be to the media's liking, of course.

Zohra Yusuf, chairperson, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, while speaking at a discussion said that if media had reformed itself, most of the issues now being faced would have been avoided. Referring to criticisms of Geo by other media organizations after the attack on Mir, she pointed out that "the desire to be more patriotic than others [by the media] is neither fair nor needed."

In 2015, the Pakistani media will need to take the lead in self-devising and implementing a mechanism whereby a system of in-house primary accountability is established that can entertain complaints from anyone and everyone to allow for a non-punitive correctional facility. This will obviate the need for extreme measures as the outset by either powerful state institutions or media regulators – as happened in 2015 – and instead make actions by them necessary only when the primary in-house redressal mechanisms fail.

The other key ethical challenge for Pakistani media in 2015 will be how to meet the need for qualified, experienced and professional editors to run the all-important editorial side of news channels and much needed in-house training of all editorial staff. Additionally, in 2015, there is a need to organize consumer activism to raise the demand side of ethical and professionalism that can put pressure on media houses to radically tone down sensationalism and hysteria, and the needless despondency engendered by treating anything and everything as breaking news.

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Chapter 5: MEDIA LAWS

'Treason' and 'blasphemy' – and coercive use of legal mechanisms as tools to browbeat media

A round-up of trends in the legal realm for Pakistani media in 2014

By Aftab Alam

Even at the best of times Pakistani media remains under pressure from various quarters and detractors who use a variety of indirect tactics to intimidate it. Year 2014, however, came to be characterized by a number of troubling developments in the realm of electronic media of Pakistan when laws came to be used formally to browbeat and censure it for the first time. Other than 2007, when there was a crackdown on media, this was arguably the most violent year for media since the airwaves were opened for private ownership in 2002 under the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory (PEMRA) law. The media was directly under attack, both, from within and outside.

From within the media sector experienced extreme polarization after an assassination attempt on prominent journalist Hamid Mir on April 19, 2014, as business competition among media houses morphed into unethical catcalling, including free bandying of allegations of treason and blasphemy against each other. From without, PEMRA banned transmissions of at least two TV channels and imposed fines on them on charges of "harming national interest" and "committing blasphemy." Criminal cases under Sections 295-C and 298 of the Pakistan Penal Code were also registered against the channels on complaints of alleged blasphemy.

The first use of law against media was filing of a complaint by the government itself when the Federal Ministry of Defense became a petitioner to PEMRA against prominent news and current affairs channel Geo News, alleging that it had "brought premier spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) into disrepute and harming national interest." The complainant asked for revocation of license of Geo News and prosecution of its editorial and management teams under regulatory laws. Resultantly, PEMRA suspended transmission of Geo News for 15 days and imposed a fine of Rs10 million, the first time a broadcaster was punished thus.

PEMRA also banned Geo Entertainment – another TV channel of Geo Group – and ARY News for 30 days and 15 days respectively on allegations of "airing blasphemous programs." The regulator also fined both channels Rs10 million each. However, punishment for these alleged crimes through punitive actions of the regulator did not stop here. In various districts of the country, 75 criminal cases were also registered against the management of Geo Television Network for airing these allegedly blasphemous programs. Additionally, an anti-terrorism court in Gilgit-Baltistan region also tried the owner of Geo, an actress and her husband in absentia and for the same programs on charges of blasphemy and awarded 26 years of imprisonment and a fine of Rs1.3 million on them.

Legally illegal, or illegally legal?

How rational – and appropriate – was the use of law to coercively punish the media? A careful perusal of the PEMRA law reveals that the PEMRA Ordinance-2002 authorizes the Authority exclusively to regulate "the establishment and operation of all broadcast media and distribution services in Pakistan." All PEMRA licensees are under obligation to ensure compliance of the "Terms and Conditions of the License" as mentioned in Section 20 of the ordinance. Any infringement of these 'Terms and Conditions' and any other provision of the same law can be complained to the Council of Complaints (CoC) established under Section 26 of the ordinance.

These 'Terms and Conditions' cover various aspects of potentially questionable content of electronic media including relating to: the "preservation of the sovereignty, security and integrity of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; and national, cultural, social and religious values and the principles of public policy as enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan." The 'Terms and Conditions' also require the licensees to "ensure that all programmes and advertisements do not contain or encourage violence, terrorism, racial, ethnic or religious discrimination, sectarianism, extremism, militancy, hatred, pornography, obscenity, vulgarity or other material offensive to commonly accepted standards of decency." Furthermore, they require the licensees to comply with rules as well as codes of conduct for programs and advertisements made by PEMRA. The 'code of conduct for programs' requires that "no Program shall be aired which … (k) promotes, aids or abets any offence which is cognizable under the applicable laws."

This means PEMRA has the *sole* authority to take cognizance of any kind of violation of any law of the land by its licensees rather than other parties. According to the procedure in PEMRA law, a person from general public can file a complaint with the CoC "against any aspect of programmes broadcast or distributed" by any PEMRA licensee. The Council shall review the complaints and can "recommend to the Authority appropriate action" of censure or fine against the licensee for violation of the laws. In certain cases, PEMRA can prohibit the violator from "broadcasting or re-broadcasting or distributing any programme or advertisement." PEMRA can also "revoke or suspend the license of violator" on certain grounds. Therefore, no court can directly take cognizance of any offence mentioned in PEMRA Ordinance, except on a written complaint by the regulator. PEMRA alone, therefore, can file a complaint to a court of law – of a magistrate of the first class – to take cognizance of such offences.

Legal challenges and trends to look out for the Pakistani media sector in 2015

In view of the above, PEMRA has exclusive statutory authority to deal with the violations by its licensees and yet the government itself, as well as courts in 2014 bypassed the legal necessity of following the process defined in the PEMRA law to deal with the alleged violations of some broadcasters. Therefore, if PEMRA has imposed a punishment of fine on ARY and Geo Entertainment, no other criminal case under the general criminal laws can be filed in the same case against the same accused. Any other criminal proceeding, other than those initiated by PEMRA itself, against a PEMRA licensee raises a question of conflict of

laws – special law versus general law. It is a well-established legal principle that 'special law overrides the general law.' The PEMRA Ordinance, as a special law, has overriding effect "notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law for the time being in force."

Similarly, penalizing the accused by two authorities – PEMRA and criminal courts – for a single offence is tantamount to double jeopardy, which is a violation of the Article 13 of the Constitution of Pakistan. While the PEMRA has already imposed fine – a criminal penalty – upon these channels, registration of criminal cases – under section 295-C and 298 of the Pakistan Penal Code – is equivalent to accusing/punishing someone twice for a single offence. This is an unprecedented situation where TV channels are being tried and punished twice for one offence.

The confusion prevailing among the various authorities in Pakistan about concurrent application of general and special laws on the subjects of a special law as well as imposition of dual punishment for single offence needs to be cleared. Unless this fundamental issue is resolved, Year 2015 for Pakistan's broadcast media sector in particular will be a major challenge, leaving the media vulnerable to double legal jeopardy.

Already considered an "over legislated country," stakeholders in Pakistan need to create conditions and improve mechanisms that ensure that where more than one law and parallel forums exist to adjudicate one offence, PEMRA licensees are not subjected to more than one punishment for one offence.

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Chapter 6: DIGITAL FREEDOMS

Eroding rights and protections for Pakistan's digital citizens

A round-up of trends in the digital and social media realm for Pakistan in 2014

By Nighat Daad

Pakistan, like many other countries in Global South, has seen an increase in the use of internet usage over the past five years, along with an alarming rise in the censorship and blocking of content online. With the new pro-business government of Pakistan Muslim League-N led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in place, many in the country were hoping in 2014 to see new policies for development of internet and protection of freedom of internet. But the trends of 2014 showed the Sharif administration becoming merely the latest in line pursuing old policies in line with military and civilian law enforcement agencies restricting information and communications technologies (ICTs) citing national security. Human rights watchdogs have also blamed them of strengthening military and police powers, instead of addressing past abuses.

The previous regimes in Pakistan preferred a behind-the-scene approach for controlling internet freedom but the Sharif regime in its first 18 months in office has been vocal in the Parliament and on media for using strong measures to censor social media in the name of combating terrorism and safeguarding Islam. Online censorship in Pakistan continued in 2014 to reflect political motives in acquiescence of greater pressures of religious extremists.

Violence spreads online

The controversial blasphemy law also influenced a series of incidents which violated internet user rights during 2014. Four women were violently killed in rural areas of Pakistan for using digital technology, which their communities condemned as immoral. In the central province of Punjab, several people faced blasphemy charges based on SMS or Facebook messages, including one couple in their 40s who were sentenced to death, even though the phone they were accused of using was not in their possession. A lawyer defending another digital blasphemy suspect was lethally shot in his office for accepting the case.

The YouTube ban in Pakistan entered its third year in 2015. The video sharing platform has been completely blocked in Pakistan since September 2012, when an anti-Islamic video sparked unrest around the Muslim world, including in Pakistan. Despite claims made by the government time to time in restoring access to the popular video sharing website, access to YouTube still remains blocked and there is little optimism that the situation will change in 2015 on this count.

But perhaps what was most alarming in 2014 was the range of technologies being adopted for censorship on the internet and blocking of online content without any legislative framework in place giving way for oppression of freedom of speech and political dissent. The rhetoric of cultural protectionism and national security has resulted in alarming rise of

internet censorship where websites, social media pages, blogs and accounts have been blocked on religious and national security grounds.

Online discussion and tweets have been manipulated by paid commentators spreading misinformation and military propaganda on social media. The issue of manipulating online discussions and political dissent in Pakistan's restive southwestern province of Balochistan is much severe where apparently paid political propagandists are hijacking political discussions and human rights issues.

In 2014 international think tank Citizen Lab presented solid evidence of surveillance system "Netsweeper" being used on servers of Pakistan Telecom Co Ltd (PTCL) in Pakistan. Later civil society group Digital Rights Foundation presented an investigative evidence-backed report where it was established that Pakistan is the customer of notorious surveillance software Finfisher since 2013. In Pakistan, while the term 'privacy' was used in the legislative process long before more developed countries did, it has become increasingly intrusive of its citizen's private lives online, censoring content on a whim, impacting freedom of expression.

Journalists and dissidents online are emerging as the most vulnerable communities in Pakistan because of the lack of digital security awareness and relevant cyber laws. These groups have historically remained prime targets of coercive censorship and surveillance. Not only journalists in Pakistan embrace self-censorship as a routine due to this, there have been several instances of them being abducted and threatened in case something they talk about contradicts or hurts the official national security narrative of the state at large.

Challenges in digital and online spaces to look out for in Pakistan in 2015

A major challenge – providing legal protections and mechanisms in terms of digital rights for Pakistanis – that remained a hallmark of 2014 is set to remain in 2015. At the start of 2015 Pakistan continued to lack a comprehensive cybercrime law. A draconian piece of law, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Ordinance-2007, issued by military ruler Pervez Musharraf, lapsed in 2009 and since then has not been replaced by another law to provide legal remedies to the growing victims of cybercrimes in Pakistan, although in 2014, several legislations were passed that curb freedom of expression in both the offline and online spaces. The Pakistan Protection Act-2014 is one of them which categorized unspecified "internet offenses" as terrorism, with suspects liable to arbitrary detention. Similarly, in the wake of a vicious terrorist attack in December 2014 on a school in Peshawar in which over 130 students were killed, the government came up with some bizarre media policy recommendations which, among others, contain a section on social media intending to control internet space by actively monitoring and surveilling internet and social media users.

According to Freedom on the Net report 2014 by Freedom House "Pakistan scored 69 points (on a list of 0 to 100, where 100 is worst) and is categorized in the "Not Free" list of countries, two points down from the preceding year's rankings. It will be major challenge for Pakistan to improve its categorization in 2015 in this internationally and widely recognized ranking. Pakistan is in dire need of strong, citizen-centric cyber laws that provide for

guarantees and legally enforceable mechanisms to ensure respect for civil liberties online and which reflect international best human rights standards.

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Chapter 7: SOCIAL MEDIA

A Year in Hashtags: Mainstreaming of Digitalization of News Media Sources

A round-up of trends in social media and online activism for Pakistan in 2014

By Sadaf Khan

The Internet Service Providers Association of Pakistan (ISPAK) estimates over 25 million internet users in Pakistan out of which about 15 million users are accessing mobile based internet. Other estimates place the number of total users at 30 million. In 2013, the International Telecommunication Union (ICU) estimated that nearly 10% of the population of Pakistan is using the internet. With the formal introduction of 3G and 4G technology in 2014, the number of internet subscribers in the country stands to speed up in 2015 and beyond. With millions of users now virtually connected, social media is fast emerging as an alternate source of news, information and entertainment in Pakistan.

With more and more politicians starting to use digital media and political parties setting up formal social media desks, it is no wonder that in 2014 the digital sphere became one of the battlefronts of the warring political parties. Be it Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf, Nawaz Sharif's centrist Pakistan Muslim League-N, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's left-of-center Pakistan People's Party, Sirajul Haq's right of center Jamaet-e-Islami, or other political and ideological groups, Twitter and Facebook warriors from each group in 2014 took the political debate to the digital sphere resulting in a rapidly emerging public political discourse online.

Analytics of Pakistan based internet users show a preference for news and political content. Various news based websites are included in the top 100 visited sites of Alexa's Pakistan rankings. Websites of newspapers like Dawn, Tribune and Express are often ranked within the top 15 visited sites in the country. Apart from formal journalistic outlets, websites like propakistani.pk and siasat.pk are sucessfully combining news and entertainment and and remain quite popular. News curation and commentary sites like humariweb and zemtv are also gaining populrality with humariweb at the end of 2014 ranked as 14th most popular website in Pakistan. Social media also offers the unique opportunity to report on media itself and sites like journalismpakistan.com are creating their own niche by breaking stories about the mainstream media and journalists online.

Twitter trumps Facebook as vehicle of principal political opinion

In the year 2014, the mainstream media in Pakistan appears to have preferred Twitter as the key web-based source of political information. As a medium of political communication, Twitter may seem restrictive - by limiting expression to 140 characters. Despite this, the Year of the Dharna [public protest sit-in], saw Twitter in Pakistan formally being used as a space to publicize causes, mobilize protestors and often terrorize political opponents. The

most popular Twitter accounts in Pakistan reflect the local users' inclination towards politics and political commentary.

At the end of 2014, PTI Chairperson Imran Khan remained the most popular personality on Twitter with 1.93 million followers. His party also runs multiple official party accounts, all of which remain largely popular among the Pakistani Twitterati. Popular Twitter users from other parties remain distantly behind Khan when it comes to numbers, with Sharif's politically active daughter Maryam Nawaz, one of PML-N's most active users with over 892,000 followers and Bilawal, media's favorite Twitter pick from PPP with 699,000 followers on Twitter. Other highly popular accounts include media personalities like Hamid Mir who is followed by 990,000 people on Twitter and Mubashir Luqman who is followed by over a million users.

AsimBajwaISPR
@AsimBajwaISPR

ISPR Release:#COAS was asked by the Govt to play facilitative role for resolution of current impasse, in yesterday's meeting, at #PM House

6:09 PM - 29 Aug 2014

22,048 RETWEETS 21,672 FAVORITES

The media, also increasingly used tweets by senior politicians, often airing them as breaking news. One of the most influential tweets that received heavy media coverage was military spokesman Major General Asim Bajwa's tweet regarding the Sharif government's reported request to the army chief to facilitate a breakthrough in dialogue with Khan's PTI. Interestingly, the tweet was a part of a press release by military media wing ISPR but the coverage was heavily dependent on the single tweet that was instantly picked up by all news channels and subsequently attracted responses from most parliamentary parties. This was the first instance of Pakistan's perennial conflicted civil-military relations being news-sourced to social media.

Another example in 2014 of political interaction initiated via social media, is the Twitter fueled feud between Pakistan Peoples' Party and Altaf Hussain's Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Bilawal's numerous Twitter messages to 'Uncle Altaf' of MQM were picked up by mainstream news channels and papers and the coverage led to formal, angry responses by MQM.

The year 2014 also saw the release of multiple videos and images online that led to media trials of various politicians. One of the most heavily covered video, initially shared on social media showed former Interior Minister Rehman Malik allegedly offloaded from a PIA flight after causing a delay of over an hour in plane take-off. The media also continued to follow up this story as different versions of the fate of the videographer emerged online. This particular video also became the source of debate on VIP culture on various digital platforms including Facebook, Twitter and Dailymotion.

Despite the abundance of politically driven content that populated the Pakistan internet sphere 2014, it remains clear that both political leaders and their followers on social media are still learning to use the medium effectively. PTI did establish itself as the party that 'rules' Twitter in Pakistan and the trending topics in Pakistan have included multiple hashtags about Imran Khan for the whole year. However, supporters of Khan's PTI were specially accused of 'trolling, the abuse of social media and ganging up on internet users who dared to oppose Khan.

The few examples shared here show only but a glimpse of the vibrant debate that happened on Twitter and other social media platforms in 2014. This digital medium is fast emerging as a new avenue that allows the space for diversity of opinion that the mainstream media perhaps, cannot incorporate – the popularity of hashtags #AskGHQ and #ReclaimYourMosques shows that Twitter in Pakistan is becoming a medium that allows people to share opinions and ask questions in a way that is currently not possible on the mainstream media.

Challenges for Pakistani media in 2015 on use of social media to source news in 2015

The year 2014 in hashtags remained dominated by PTI and Khan. So, it is no surprise that the year also ended with the mainstream media giving heavy coverage to another Twitter declaration by him. This tweet and the subsequent media frenzy, reflects one of the ugly sides of media-social media relationship, something that is expected to continue to be a challenge in 2015. The media eagerly used unauthorized pictures of Reham Khan, whom Imran Khan finally wed in early 2015, and her children to visualize the coverage of this story – these pictures included those circulated on social media with malicious commentary on Reham's character and lifestyle. The media's failure to

review these pictures and the decision to air them without seeking consent from Ms Khan was indicative of the inability of Pakistani journalists to understand how to use social media content in a professional and ethical manner. This challenge will remain a major one for Pakistani media in 2015.

The fact that in the social media spat between PPP of Bilawal and MQM of Hussain, both mainstream media and the political forces responded to debate generated online, is a clear indication of how conversations online will continue to have a real impact on national political debate in Pakistan and are expected to do so in 2015.

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Chapter 8: MEDIA RATINGS

Selling media consumers to advertisers at the cost of public interest journalism

A round-up of trends and impact of the media ratings system in Pakistan in 2014

By Asad Baig

The Year 2014 came to be defined for media in Pakistan as one in which the fight over TRPs became fierce. So, what is TRP? Television Rating Point, or TRP as it is commonly referred to, is a tool to gauge viewership of televised content. The data gathered draws a comprehensive map of drops and surges in active TV audiences at any given time. With observance of geographical spread and duration of viewing, it presents a sample size of people's choice in real-time. TRPs are usually gathered using what's called the Television Audience Measurement (TAM) systems. TAM refers to a systematic method of recording and analyzing TRP data. In Pakistan, this data literally drives the media economy.

Since the broadcast sector was opened up for private ownership in Pakistan in 2002, the advertising spend has gone up significantly – from about Rs7 billion to around Rs35 billion by the start of 2014. Unsurprisingly, TV is the leading shareholder in Pakistan's annual advertising budget, with about 61% share. Most of the advertisers are medium/large enterprises and corporates looking to reach audiences on a mass level. While they don't entirely rely on TRP data, it still is the most widely used market assessment tool. Considering Pakistan's electronic media's absolute dependence on advertisement-based revenue, the ratings' game in 2014 became an existential quest for media houses.

Gallup Pakistan and Media Logic are two major groups currently operating TAM in Pakistan. Gallup Pakistan is using what's commonly referred to as 'the diary system' and is primarily based on household (physical) surveys across the country, maintaining a sample size of about 4,800 from urban and around 700 from rural centers. Media Logic uses a technological option available through People's Meters – devices installed in selected households to record, in real-time, the viewing patterns of a particular household. Media Logic has deployed about 1,100 meters in 20 cities and claims to have access to about 6,500 individual consumers (on average 6 per household). According to figures provided by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Media Logic holds the major market-share in Pakistan's media industry with the highest number of TRP subscribers (broadcasters and advertisers).

Two systems, one conclusion

The big question asked in 2014 was whether 1,100 households and 6,500 individuals present an accurate sample size for more than 20 million households and about 135 million individuals (with access to television sets), especially when the content focus is extremely urban centric? Probably not. Can it then be safely deduced that TAM in Pakistan is currently

flawed? Is it responsible for declining standards of broadcast media, especially news and current affairs content? The answer is still no....

Neither Media Logic nor Gallup Pakistan claim to represent the 'national' viewing patterns and are not aimed at collecting nation-wide TV ratings. The reason for this is simple: TAM with Media Logic was set up by Pakistan Advertisers' Society (PAS), in consultation with Pakistan Broadcasters' Association (PBA) in September 2007, with a priority of generating TRP data and fine-tuning analysis for advertisers, not broadcasters. Major advertisers have a large consumer market in these urban centers and so the sample size is based on socio-economic profiling, assuming that trends set at major urban centers are naturally followed by their rural counterparts which explains the reason for geographical limitations. In short, Media Logic, the prime source of TRP data for broadcasters and advertisers in Pakistan, is delivering all what it has committed, if not more so.

So, does that mean TRP are not at all responsible for broadcast journalism's declining standards in Pakistan? TRP yes, but TAM no!

From public service to corporate interest

TAM provides comprehensive data sets to advertisers who are looking for best TV channels and time slots for their product coverage. However, the problem starts when broadcasters, using the same data, try to fine-tune their programing and news content in an attempt to make it 'advertiser friendly'. Almost 100% of broadcast media's revenue is ad-based which makes commercial viability a serious threat for media houses. Attempts to bag the highest number of advertisements leads to an indecorous race for ratings pushing against the editorial standards and quality controls, causing broadcast (news) media to deviate from its original mandate, public service – and instead, safeguarding the corporate interests of advertisers. Media's over-commercialism results in self-censorship causing it to intentionally overlook stories of great public importance, bringing under question the very ideology of an 'independent media'.

Broadcast media's unfair attention to urban centers is resulting into a disproportionate coverage of issues specific to rural population, which constitutes a larger part of the total population. This trend presents another serious problem, affecting media pluralisms and diversity. Regional channels, catering mostly to regional population, will never be able to perform on an urban centric TRP scale, putting them at a disadvantage in-term of business development.

Short of alternatives

So then improving TAM is a solution? In the short term maybe, but in the long term definitely not. Improving TAM would mean adding additional People Meters to the existing infrastructure, which essentially means improved representation of currently sidelined geographical regions and populace. A good indicator, but it will not deter the media houses from religiously following TRP data to ensure profit maximization and regional TV channels would still bear the brunt. Ultimately with an analog signal transmission and distribution system (such as in Pakistan) it's technically impossible to have accurate viewership readings.

The only technically accurate TRP data in Pakistan is currently being gathered by PTCL [Pakistan Telecom Co Ltd] using digital feedback from their broadband TV subscribers. There are about 40,000 PTCL Smart TV subscribers including 215 in Quetta which is currently the largest regional representation for any TAM operating in Pakistan.

Bol Television Network, scheduled for formal launch in 2015 after several missed deadlines in 2014, intends to introduce an independent system to record TRP data with an enhanced geographical and ethical representation but the credibility of any such analysis coming out of a competing media group is likely to be challenged by other media groups. In 2015, this proposed system will be keenly watched for realization of any intended value addition, or improvement but at the start of 2015 not many were holding their breaths.

Media ratings systems challenges and trends to look out for in 2015

What would constitute the best TRP solution for Pakistan's burgeoning media then? Digital switchover presents an excellent potential solution to pursue in 2015. It refers to the conversion of signal transmission and distribution (through cable operators and other means) from analog to digital. Each of the household will then be equipped with a set-top-television box and will help in accurate gathering of viewership patterns. It will further improve the record-keeping of subscribers through a particular service provider, a feat which is impossible currently. Will such a digital TAM improve broadcast journalism? A digital TAM, alone, is not the answer. The root of the problem is broadcast media's over-dependence on advertisement based revenue. The main reason for which is the lack of a suitable commercial environment, depriving media houses of their legitimate profits as commercial entities.

Among other potential alternative revenue sources for the broadcast media in Pakistan, subscription revenue is on top. Broadcast media is Pakistan's largest news content producer and as such, is not remunerated for content consumption. Instead, the distribution and subscription fee directly and solely goes to the distributor (the cable operators). Surprisingly, the market volume of cable industry is much higher than the Pakistan's total advertisement-spend for all mediums put together. Add to this, the inability to find exact number of subscribers for a particular cable network operator and hence the total number of subscribers in Pakistan (the figures provided by surveys and other sources are merely an educated guess).

With the digital switchover, an exact directory can be maintained, keeping track of not only subscribers but subscription revenue as well, bringing a substantial and currently under-taxed industry in the tax net as well, so win-win for all. But most importantly, with right policies, the subscription revenue can be shared with the broadcast media outlets, the original content producers, establishing a legitimate alternative revenue stream for media houses and improving the connection between broadcasters and media consumers.

The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has the responsibility of digital switchover in Pakistan, and being a member (and a signatory) of International Telecommunication Union, it is required to provide a roadmap for digitization. While the

process on some level started in 2014 and PEMRA is requesting bids for digital cable operator licenses, Pakistan is still one of those few countries who haven't declared the current status of digitization on ITU's website.

PEMRA has marked Year 2015 as the deadline for Pakistan's digital switchover and while other South Asian countries are well on their way in transitions from analog to digital, Pakistan still has a long way to go. For Pakistan to foster a truly independent media, it's crucial to make the media industry commercially sustainable in compliance with international standards and conventions. Progress in 2015 will demonstrate the government's political will to do so.

*This article is a brief summary of a comprehensive report by Center for Peace and Development Initiative (CPDI) on Pakistan's media economy titled 'Broadcast Journalism in Pakistan – A Hostage to Media Economics' authored by Asad Baig.

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Chapter 9: CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Re-defining journalism in an age of ubiquitous information and convergence of technologies in Pakistan

A round-up of the growing debate on the changing face of journalism in Pakistan in 2014

By Phyza Jameel

One of the key characteristics of over 20 million internet users in Pakistan and their habituation and utility of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter is political expression. This characteristic became pronounced in 2014 thanks to the tensions between the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-N of Nawaz Sharif and opposition Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf of Imran Khan spilling online. Most of these millions of social media users, it seemed, were obsessed with politics and their angry opinions and animated commentary on events that were the constant focus of current affairs and 24-hour TV coverage beggared the question: could all these Pakistani netizens be considered as "citizen journalists" if they were continuously obsessing about current affairs and news?

It is not easy to answer this question to the satisfaction of all the aggressive proponents and passionate detractors within Pakistan's media and civil society communities. There is vehement opposition in the ranks of formal journalists and their representative body of 18,000 working journalists, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) to the concept that any citizen participating in the processes and businesses of information, news, opinion and analysis is a 'citizen journalist.' The PFUJ defines a 'journalist' is only one that principally derives his or her salary or earnings through working for a media organization. This definition is decades old and does not reflect that radically changed landscape of information generation, processing, distribution and consumption, including the rise of real-time media and the internet where there is no technical or conceptual difference between, say, the act of a TV channel filming an event and broadcasting it via satellite to be transmitted through its channel, and a citizen who uses her mobile phone to film an event and upload it on Internet for anyone to see.

Any debate, as the one that emerged in 2014 in Pakistan about whether citizens not formally working for a media organization are journalists, require recourse to definitions, context and antecedents. The story of citizen journalism is quite old actually – Abraham Zapruder, an American clothing manufacturer who filmed the assassination of US President John F Kennedy on November 22, 1963 on his home movie recorder may be regarded as first citizen journalists. But he wasn't a 'citizen journalist' till he was interviewed on mainstream media and once his film was bought by mainstream media for $150,000 ($1.1 million in today's worth), he may be recognized as one of the key persons in the history for home video filming, but he wasn't actually taken as a citizen journalist as such. Till he died, he was known as a cloth manufacturer who filmed the JFK shooting and not as a journalist.

The historic events of spring of 2011 in Arab world became of the most recognized movements for citizen journalists around the world, which marked a new life for citizen journalists, freeing them somehow (but not completely) from being adopted for their content distribution by the mainstream media. These citizen journalists were born at a time where alternative power of distribution such as YouTube and social networks was already established and recognized among the people as an effective means of acquiring their information from.

Mainstreaming acceptability

The Pakistan of 2014, a heavily media savvy population, is little better in terms of recognizing the changes in information sphere, than in the Abraham Zaruder era. In practice, in 2014 in Pakistan blogging and citizen journalism have been trying to emerge as a parallel form of media, bringing activism and accountability to the existing information mechanisms. And yet in terms of mainstream acceptability by the conventional media sector, citizen journalism in Pakistan is struggling to find its own identity, not only in terms of means of content generation and distribution, but even in definition and recognition. In 2014 there were several instances where content produced by citizens became piece of news and information – for example former interior minister Rehman Malik being chased off a plane for delaying the flight and instances of shootings and suicide bombings caught on private cameras and mobile phones. And yet no one in general and by the conventional media in particular, remembers or considers any of these private content producers as "citizen journalists" or even contributors to the mainstream media.

The emergence of citizen or grassroots journalism in Pakistan inevitably raises the question of whether bloggers, the operators of online news sites, or even freelancers should be considered journalists with the same legal rights as reporters who are employed by traditional news organizations. Defining who is a 'journalist' has become more complicated as the variety of media has expanded. The traditional definition of a journalist is based on employment or association. These indicators to define journalists in this era have become obsolete globally and this excludes citizen journalists, bloggers, opinion makers, feature writers, authors and freelancers as well a freedom of expression defenders.

Challenges of mainstreaming citizen journalism for Pakistan in 2015

The biggest challenge to accepting citizen journalists in the fold of the practice of journalism in Pakistan in 2015 will be how to reach a broader understanding of the changing nature of the information world and to redefine basic concepts relating to journalism. Proponents in Pakistan say there is an urgent need to replace the traditional definition of journalists (as only those formally employed) with a new definition that is functional in its articulation. A popularly proposed definition by these proponents says "One who does/practices journalism is a journalist." Too broad, cry denouncers. One way to resolve this conundrum is first re-defining journalism before re-defining who is a journalist.

Here are some thoughts that can be considered while re-defining who is a journalist, not only in terms of legality (who is under direct jurisdiction of state and who is under direct

jurisdiction of employed organization, if any), but also in terms of status and authority of the content one is producing.

In recent years in Europe and the US, the argument goes that the definitions should reject both the employment/association-based definition of a journalist as well as the Cartesian definition: "I think (or say) I am a journalist, therefore I *am* a journalist. It holds: I *do* journalism, therefore I am a journalist." The news reporter, radio producer, blogger and freelance opinion maker, all enjoy the protection of constitutions under Article 19, as also in Pakistan, but only the first two are likely to be covered by law that turns on function.

To qualify for protection under law, the definition of a journalist needs to be seen in reference with the definition of journalism. Even though the idea of journalism is to 'impart information' and rooted deep with the concept of 'freedom of expression' but for working out a definition for layman, here are a few points to be considered:

Journalism means there is a *story:* A journalist pursues a story (or a series of stories/articles). That is, the activity is aimed at producing a journalistic work product. In terms of being a citizen journalists, while pursuing the story, they take this decision for themselves, assuming authority of an editor for their own content, which they can produce. Whether the story is published or distributed is irrelevant but not controlling similarly what medium was used to distribute or publish the story is again irrespective of the act of journalism and should be considered journalism in spite of conventional medium was used or non-conventional medium.

Journalism means to have a story for *audience:* This means that the work product, content or story is aimed at an *audience*. It must be intended to be read or seen or heard. Poet, or bloggers (or, for example, Dawn / Jang reporters) writing only for personal satisfaction on their personal blog interacting with their family would not qualify for protection under law, and neither should be recognized as journalists. But the police officer filming Imran Khan taking a VIP plane during his No-VIP-Culture Campaign, and putting it on Facebook, and YouTube definitely qualifies to be a citizen journalist; since he took a stance of sharing that video with others knowing the consequences and risks involved just a mainstream media practitioner.

Journalist's work is for *public benefit*: This means that there is a *public benefit* to the story or work product. The law then exist because of the assumption that there is a public benefit to journalism and as a result society is justified in extending special protection to those who practice it. The same rule in principle applies on citizen journalists. It's a self-compelling decision they take for the public good, of bringing more accountability and alternative angle to usual norms and ideas (which at times mainstream media professes)

Journalist's work with the intent of journalism: At its core, the functional definition of journalism is much like the functional definition of a duck. If it looks like journalism, acts like journalism, and produces the work of journalism, then it is journalism, and the people doing it are journalists. The work of a journalist goes through various stages of development in terms of ways of content generation and means of distribution, etc. But it starts with the intent of producing that work for the audience with the aim of spreading it to wider

audience. This intent is the decision they take for themselves to the risks and consequences which can be brought to them in return of spreading it out, thus less shielded than mainstream media, and higher vulnerability; calling for a higher protection of citizen journalists and bloggers by the state.

So, whoever they are in their primary identities, may it be one piece or several pieces, may it be a few minutes' long film shot on mobile phone camera, or a full fledge documentary, the one producing it is recognized and covered under protection of law in many developed states, and so should this be the case in Pakistan in 2015.

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