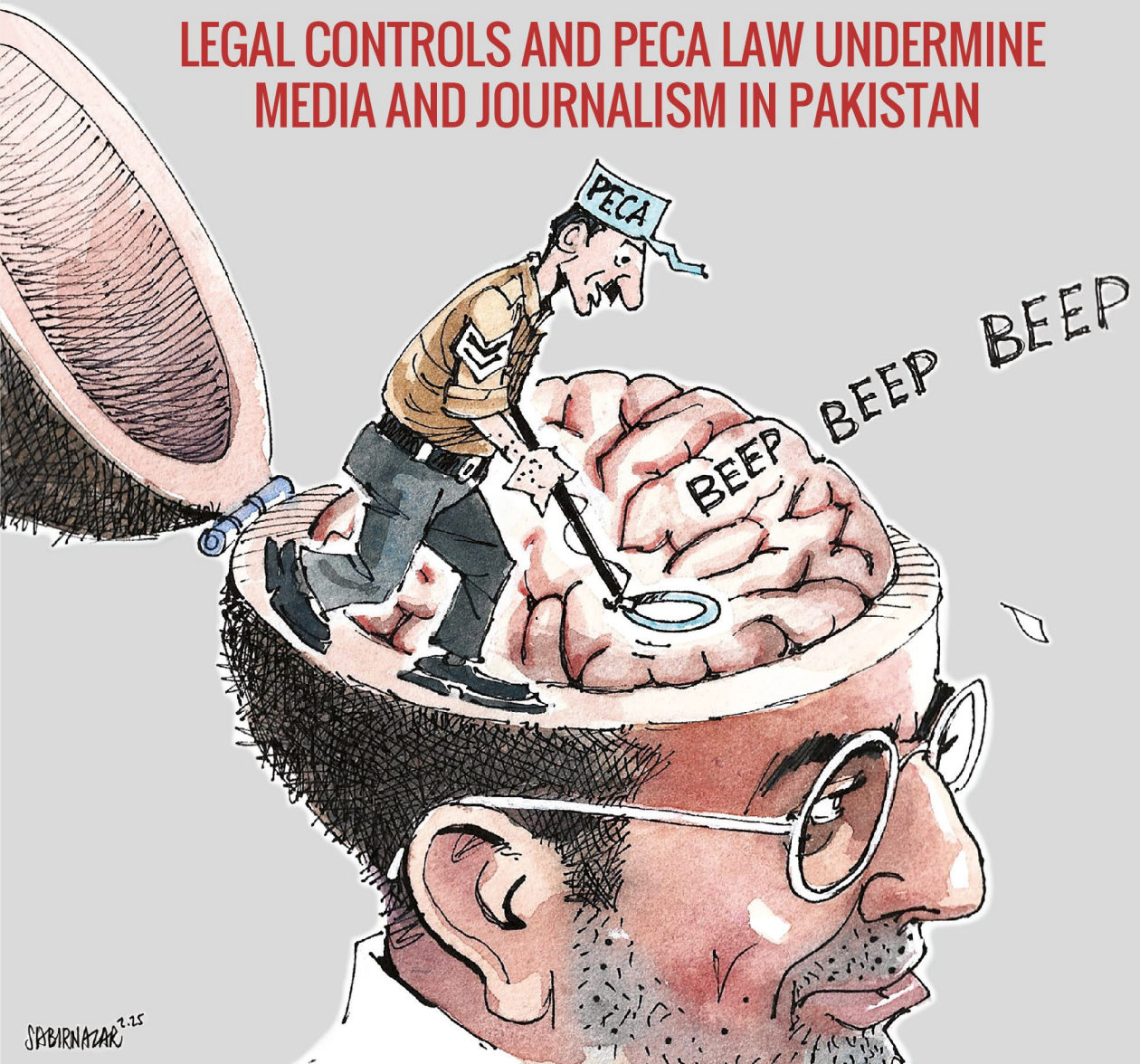


REGULATORY REPRESSION OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

LEGAL CONTROLS AND PECA LAW UNDERMINE
MEDIA AND JOURNALISM IN PAKISTAN



May 3, 2026 – World Press Freedom Day Report

Adnan Rehmat and Iqbal Khattak



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DISCLAIMER

The data used and analyzed in this report was generated by the Safety Hubs Network, which Freedom Network helped establish and manages in partnerships with the National Press Club, Islamabad, Karachi, Press Club, Lahore Press Club, Multan Press Club, Quetta Press Club, Peshawar Press Club, Gilgit Press Club and Muzaffarabad Press Club, and which now includes three virtual hubs for monitoring threats against women and digital journalists and professionals belonging to religious minorities. The hubs monitor and document threats and attacks against journalists using pre-developed templates with cases cross-verified by press clubs, journalists' unions, media houses and journalists and / or their families. The hubs also provide intermediation assistance for victims. In serious cases, the victims are assisted through the Pakistan Journalists Safety Fund (PJSF), also managed by Freedom Network. The list of cases included and considered for analysis in this report is based on cases brought to the notice of the Safety Hubs Network. This is not necessarily an exhaustive list. The actual number of violations against journalists may be higher than the cases documented here. *Limitation of liability:* The list of threat actors provided in this report is based on information provided by victims, or their families, and alleged involvement of suspected threat actors cannot be independently verified either by the co-authors, Safety Hubs Network or Freedom Network, therefore, Freedom Network or its staff and associates cannot be liable for the information.

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Executive Summary

The period from mid-2025 to mid-2026 was defined by escalating pressures on Pakistan’s media environment with the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) standing out as the most consequential instrument of restriction against journalists and other free speech practitioners. Originally intended to address cybercrime, PECA’s vague provisions have been increasingly weaponized against journalists, lawyers, and political commentators, criminalizing lawful expression and silencing dissent. High-profile convictions, such as those of human rights lawyers Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha, exemplified how custodial sentences were used to intimidate, while dozens of other journalists faced charges under its expanded clauses. This legal coercion, coupled with defamation suits, regulatory suspensions and internet blackouts, created a climate of fear that narrowed the space for independent reporting and undermined public interest journalism in the review period.

The broader legal and regulatory framework reinforced these constraints. Right to Information (RTI) laws, though present across federal and provincial levels, were inconsistently enforced with federal institutions particularly resistant to disclosure. Secrecy persisted through colonial-era statutes, frustrating transparency and weakening accountability. Meanwhile, disinformation and hate speech became focal points for state intervention. Supervisory councils and regulatory authorities were established to monitor and suppress what officials termed “incendiary narratives,” but these measures instead institutionalized surveillance and selective enforcement. Courts handed down severe sentences for online commentary and ambiguous definitions of “fabricated news” blurred the line between dissent and misinformation. The India-Pakistan military confrontation of May 2025 highlighted the dangers of unchecked disinformation as doctored visuals and recycled footage saturated both mainstream and social media, distorting public understanding of events.

In the same period safety of journalists remained precarious. Freedom Network documented at least 129 verified incidents of violations, with legal threats and physical harm comprising nearly two-thirds of cases. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) were the most dangerous regions while murders in Sindh and Balochistan underscored the lethal risks. State authorities were the leading perpetrators, responsible for over 60 percent of violations, often through legal and custodial actions. Non-state actors, including militant groups and criminal networks also contributed to assaults, threats and killings. Detentions of female journalists during the Aurat March in March 2026 illustrated the intersection of gendered vulnerability with broader repression. Across Pakistan journalists faced uneven risks compounded by economic fragility. Delayed salaries, dependence on government advertising and abrupt dismissals left media workers in a limbo while selective denial of advertisements to some media houses functioned as a potent form of censorship.

Women in media were particularly marginalized. Representation collapsed to just four percent of news content nationally with harassment, online abuse and exclusion from press clubs and unions reinforcing systemic gendered risks. High-profile cases of workplace harassment, deepfake abuse and detentions underscored the hostile environment. Yet modest progress was noted including leadership training initiatives and the appointment of Ambreen Jan as the first female head of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). Technology added another layer of complexity. AI adoption was tentative and uneven, constrained by linguistic barriers and infrastructural deficits. Ethical concerns about misinformation and lack of oversight persisted, though some initiatives such as *Sahafat.AI* and voluntary AI standards signaled incremental progress.

The cumulative effect of these developments in the period under review was a shrinking space for free expression in Pakistan, with journalists, citizens and rights defenders navigating an increasingly hostile terrain. The defining feature of the period was the weaponization of the PECA law and related statutes, which gravely undermined freedom of expression, media independence and public interest journalism.

Unless restrictive legal frameworks are reversed and protective structures enforced, Pakistan's media will remain trapped in a cycle of coercion, censorship, and fragility. This report produced by Freedom Network (FN) with technical assistance of International Media Support (IMS) urges decisive reforms: safety laws must be implemented, transparency strengthened and journalists provided with legal aid and institutional support. Modernization of media requires ethical integration of technology, capacity building and balanced oversight. Above all, reversing PECA-related restrictions is essential to safeguard fundamental rights, sustain professional journalism and preserve democratic accountability.

Worsening legal and regulatory environment and censorship

In the period under review, Pakistan’s legal and regulatory landscape around media and expression remained fraught with contradictions and unresolved tensions. The framework governing freedom of expression continued to be shaped by restrictive laws such as the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), first enacted in 2016 and subsequently amended in 2023 and 2025. Over the years in general and in the period in review in particular, these provisions have become central to the regulation of speech, often invoked against journalists, activists and even ordinary citizens. The judiciary’s uneven approach – some benches leaning toward liberal interpretations, others reinforcing curbs – created uncertainty that emboldened regulators and enforcement agencies, leaving those who sought constitutional protections vulnerable to punitive action.

The safety of journalists also remained a pressing and consistent concern. Despite the passage of federal and Sindh protection laws for safety of journalists in 2021, their woefully inadequate implementation has not produced expected results and impunity of crimes against journalists has persisted. The toll has been stark: over 190 journalists killed between 2000 and 2025, with convictions in only two cases. Even after the enactment of these two protective laws, killings and assaults have continued and no convictions secured against murderers, underscoring the gap between law and practice. Digital journalists, once thought to be less exposed, have increasingly faced the same dangers as their counterparts in conventional media, reflecting the broadening scope of threats in Pakistan’s information environment.

In the period under review, the question of privacy versus surveillance also came to the fore. While Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees privacy, Pakistan entered 2026 without enactment of a dedicated data protection law. The long-delayed Personal Data Protection Bill of 2023 remained under discussion, criticized for its weak safeguards. Meanwhile, the rapid expansion of digital platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) heightened risks for users. A national AI policy was approved by the federal cabinet in July 2025 but has remained dormant, lacking adequate consultation and clarity, leaving the digital economy exposed to uncertainty and regulatory gaps.

Transparency in governance has also remained undermined by weak implementation of Pakistan’s federal and provincial right to information (RTI) laws. Federal and provincial frameworks were routinely disregarded in the period under review, with public bodies refusing to disclose information despite legal obligations. The persistence of the colonial-era Official Secrets Act of 1923 reinforced a culture of opacity, frustrating both citizens and journalists. This secrecy eroded the watchdog role of the press and diminished public interest journalism,

weakening accountability mechanisms across governance structures.

Compounding these challenges for the Pakistani media in this period was the rise of information disorder. Instead of addressing disinformation through balanced measures, Pakistan’s legal instruments – ranging from PECA to the Punjab Defamation Act of 2025 and amendments to PEMRA – were deployed as censorship tools rather than information integrity enablers. Regulatory bodies such as PEMRA and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) expanded their reach in the period under review, suspending social media platforms and curbing coverage of judicial proceedings. Television channels faced abrupt suspensions while cyber firewalls restricted access to information. These measures, framed as responses to disinformation, in practice curtailed free expression and narrowed the space for independent reporting.

Taken together, these developments painted a troubling picture of Pakistan’s media and information environment in the period mid-2025 to mid-2026. Legal frameworks designed to protect rights remained under-enforced or misused, while new regulations deepened control rather than enabling transparency. Journalists continued to face violence and intimidation, privacy protections lagged behind technological realities and disinformation policies morphed into instruments of censorship. The cumulative effect was a shrinking space for free expression with citizens, journalists and rights defenders navigating an increasingly hostile terrain.

1a – PECA-related prominent cases

Following the January 2025 revision of PECA, a chorus of critics across Pakistan, ranging from journalists’ unions to civil liberties groups, repeatedly protested that the statute is increasingly wielded as a tool of suppression against journalists and information practitioners rather than a safeguard against authentic cyber offences.

A Freedom Network report revealed that until October 2025, at least 30 journalists were implicated in 36 separate proceedings under PECA¹. In April 2026, Interior Minister told the National Assembly that under the amended PECA law, 187 cases of alleged intentional dissemination of fake news and information been registered. Analysts argued that these prosecutions disproportionately singled out dissenting voices, fostering an atmosphere of intimidation across regions such as Punjab and Islamabad. Among the most prominent examples was the conviction of human rights lawyers Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha in January 2026, handed lengthy sentences for social media remarks deemed offensive – a decision denounced internationally as emblematic of systemic harassment².

Other cases illustrate the breadth of enforcement: journalist Iftikhar UI Hassan faced charges for online criticism of local governance in July 2025³; four women reporters were targeted in a

¹ *Pakistan sees sharp rise in attacks on media: Freedom Network*. (October 30, 2025). The News. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/1354596>

² *Amnesty condemns convictions of Imaan Mazari, Hadi Chattha*. (February 25, 2026). Express Tribune. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2594492/amnesty-condemns-convictions-of-imaan-mazari-hadi-chattha>

³ *Authorities & others lodge cases against journalists under PECA law*. (August 2025). Freedom Network. <https://www.fnkp.org/authorities-others-lodge-cases-against-journalists-under-peca-law>

press club WhatsApp group in August 2025⁴; multiple media professionals, including Waseem Shah, Parvez Khokhar, Muhammad Qaiser, and Iqar Gul Fras, were booked under accusations of fake news or cyberstalking. Rights advocates warned that such actions generated a chilling effect on independent digital discourse.

This recurring pattern – dubbed “black laws” by journalists’ associations – prompted constitutional challenges, with opponents stressing that PECA’s vague provisions risk criminalizing lawful expression in violation of both guarantees and international norms.

1b – RTI-related cases

During the review period, Right to Information (RTI) legislation remained operative across all four provinces – Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh – as well as at the federal level, including Islamabad. However, reported disparities persisted in the degree of enforcement and compliance. An assessment⁵ conducted by the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) on the availability of legally mandated information on public-sector websites revealed variation among jurisdictions. According to the assessment, public bodies in KP demonstrated the highest level of compliance, disclosing 57 percent of the required information online. Sindh followed with 54 percent, while Punjab registered 52 percent. Balochistan’s institutions reported 48 percent compliance, while federal public bodies lagged behind with 40 percent.

In August, Balochistan formally operationalized⁶ its RTI framework with the establishment of a statutory information commission in Quetta, marking an advance in institutionalizing public access to information, including journalists and media. In September, the Punjab Information Commission (PIC) issued two notable directives: instructing the Gujranwala Municipal Corporation to release⁷ its budgetary control register to an applicant and compelling the Chakwal district administration to disclose⁸ employee records in response to a separate complaint. In October, the Lahore High Court initiated proceedings⁹ to determine whether Aitchison College falls within the ambit of the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act – a case with potential to reshape the contours of jurisdiction under the law. In February, the Election Commission (ECP) promulgated the *Regulations for the Right of Access to Information*¹⁰, granting citizens, subject to specified conditions, the right to obtain information held by the electoral authority.

⁴ PECA case targets women journalists in WhatsApp group. (August 22, 2025). International Federation of Journalists. <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/pakistan-peca-case-targets-women-journalists-in-whatsapp-group>

⁵ Provinces outperform federal govt. in proactive information disclosure. (February 13, 2026). Free and Fair Election Network. <https://fafen.org/provinces-outperform-federal-govt-in-proactive-information-disclosure/>

⁶ Balochistan Information Commission starts operations to uphold citizens’ right to information. (August 28, 2025). Associated Press of Pakistan. <https://www.app.com.pk/domestic/balochistan-information-commission-starts-operations-to-uphold-citizens-right-to-information/>

⁷ PIC orders Gujranwala MC to release budget register and vehicle repair records. (September 10, 2025). The News. <https://e.thenews.com.pk/detail?id=431044>

⁸ Butt. A. M. (September 11, 2025). Punjab Information Commission directs Chakwal DEO to release employee records. *The News*. <https://e.thenews.com.pk/detail?id=431340>

⁹ Butt. A. M. (October 30, 2025). Aitchison College faces court scrutiny over Right to Information Law. *The News*. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/1354535>

¹⁰ ECP notifies regulations for right access to information. (February 11, 2026). Free and Fair Election Network. <https://fafen.org/ecp-notifies-regulations-for-right-access-to-information/>

Journalism practitioners and citizen activists as applicants nevertheless encountered repeated setbacks when information commissions declined to entertain their RTI petitions. In August, the PIC ruled that the RTI of 2013 did not empower¹¹ it to review its own determinations. In January, the PIC rejected¹² a request for the disclosure of expenditures at the Punjab Chief Minister House, citing the applicant’s inability to establish citizenship. In March, the Commission characterized the submission of multiple identical RTI requests an “abuse of law”, dismissing¹³ 35 complaints lodged against offices of the Punjab irrigation department. That same month, it drew further controversy by refusing¹⁴ a petition seeking information related to the Lahore High Court’s ruling on *Nikahnama* (marriage certificate) reforms. These episodes illustrate tension between statutory guarantees of access and the restrictive interpretations applied by oversight bodies, moves criticized by journalists and rights activists as obstructing transparency and misapplying statutory provisions.

1c – Defamation-related cases

In the review period, Pakistan’s judicial and regulatory climate experienced an increase in defamation proceedings, affecting media reporting. The most internationally conspicuous episode occurred when Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz in October 2025 attained judicial redress in the United Kingdom against Pakistani channel 92 News. The private broadcaster issued a public apology and accepted liability after transmitting unfounded financial irregularity claims¹⁵.

Within Pakistan, numerous journalists and commentators encountered prosecution under PECA. Cases were registered against journalists Irfan Khan and Akbar Notezai for alleged defamatory social media commentary. In February 2026, the Supreme Court suspended a Rs10 billion defamation petition lodged by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif against opposition leader Imran Khan¹⁶, illustrating how litigation over reputation intertwines with contests among political elites.

Foreign jurisdictions also continued to influence reputational disputes involving Pakistanis abroad. The libel defeat of current affairs commentator Adil Raja in the United Kingdom underscored the transactional dimension of media accountability¹⁷. Beyond the courtroom, the regulatory institutions exerted indirect pressure on speech. In March 2026, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) imposed a Rs20 million penalty on cricketer Naseem Shah for a social media statement concerning Maryam Nawaz, demonstrating how contractual codes are employed to suppress commentary deemed defamatory¹⁸.

¹¹ Butt. A. M. (August 22, 2025). Punjab Information Commission rules it can’t review its own orders. *The News*. <https://e.thenews.com.pk/detail?id=426924>

¹² But. A. M. (January 2, 2026). RTI pleas on CM House spending, official helicopter use dismissed. *The News*. <https://www.thenews.pk/print/1390309>

¹³ Butt. A. M. (March 25, 2026). PIC issues rare rebuke, terms RTI misuse ‘abuse of law’. *The News*. <https://www.thenews.pk/print/1406147>

¹⁴ Butt. A. M. (March 27, 2026). PIC rejects RTI plea on Nikahnama reforms. *The News*. <https://www.thenews.pk/print/1406583>

¹⁵ Shah, M. A. (October 21, 2025). Private news channel apologizes to Maryam Nawaz after UK defamation case. *Geo News*. <https://www.geo.tv/latest/629772-private-news-channel-apologises-to-maryam-nawaz-after-uk-defamation-case>

¹⁶ Iqbal, N. (February 21, 2026). SC stays Rs10bn defamation case against PTI founder. *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1974723>

¹⁷ Former Pakistani spy chief wins libel claim against retired major and journalist. (October 17, 2025). Doughty Street Chambers. <https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/news/former-pakistani-spy-chief-wins-libel-claim-against-retired-major-and-journalist>

¹⁸ PCB slaps hefty fine on Naseem Shah for social media post on Maryam Nawaz. (March 31, 2026). Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/>

These developments unfold amid broadened statutory definitions. Amendments to PECA and evolving enforcement practices have expanded the range of actionable content, prompting apprehension among advocates of press freedom.

1d – Internet-related cases

In the period under review, press freedom and the flow of public-interest information unfolded amid contested digital oversight and unequal access. The state’s tightening hold on online discourse, compounded by recurring connectivity failures, highlighted the fragile ground on which journalists, activists, and citizens sought to exercise their constitutional right to know.

A striking policy reversal came in May 2025, when access to social media platform X was quietly reinstated after a 14-month following electoral fraud allegations in February 2024¹⁹. Relief proved fleeting: in July 2025, an Islamabad court ordered YouTube to suspend 27 channels for allegedly spreading false anti-state narratives²⁰. That same month, authorities asked online platforms to block 481 accounts allegedly tied to terror groups. By September 2025, official data showed 456 “anti-state” cases filed, including 52 targeting the military, alongside 789 inquiries into content deemed defamatory to government organs²¹.

Restrictions were worsened by fragile connectivity infrastructure, especially in Balochistan. A 16-day blackout in August 2025 triggered the Balochistan High Court to order restoration²². Another disruption in September in internet connectivity across Pakistan was attributed to a damaged undersea cable²³. *NetBlocks* monitoring in August 2025 revealed intermittent slowdowns and localized outages, suggesting subtler forms of control during politically or religiously sensitive periods²⁴. Persistent disparities in service quality underscored reduced reporting capacities and structural inequities in access.

Pakistan’s launch of 5G services marked a rare progress. Following a March 2026 spectrum auction, major telecommunication operators secured key bands under strict rollout obligations²⁵. The deployment promises high-speed coverage beyond major cities, reduced latency and real-time transmission. For journalists, this theoretically translates into faster reporting and stronger verification and for citizens quicker access to information and a modest boost to transparency in an otherwise constrained environment.

amp/sports/2026/3/31/pcb-slaps-hefty-fine-on-naseem-shah-for-social-media-post-on-maryam-nawaz

¹⁹ PTA restores access across Pakistan. (May 7, 2025). *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1909092>

²⁰ Shahzad, A. & Shahid, A. (July 9, 2025). Pakistan seeks YouTube ban on more than two dozen critics, including journalists. *Reuters* <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/more-than-two-dozen-critics-pakistan-government-face-youtube-ban-2025-07-09>

²¹ Abbasi, A. (September 13, 2025). Govt cracks down on anti-state campaigns on social media. *Dawn*. <https://e.thenews.com.pk/detail?id=431663>

²² Shahid, S. (August 16, 2025). Balochistan High Court asks govt to rethink internet shutdown, restore transport. *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1931200>

²³ Submarine cable cut near Jeddah causing internet disruption: IT minister. (September 9, 2025). *The News*. <https://e.thenews.com.pk/detail?id=430903>

²⁴ Khan, H. A. (August 19, 2025). Global monitor reports ‘major disruption’ as internet connectivity plunges to 20% in Pakistan. *Arab News*. <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2612359/pakistan>

²⁵ Dilawar, I. (March 20, 2026). Pakistan’s 5G rollout begins as operator launches services after spectrum auction. *Arab News*. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2637001/pakistan>

Disinformation, hate speech and professional journalism

During 2025-26, the intensification of state campaigns against disinformation and hate speech produced a cascade of effects that reshaped Pakistan's information environment. The establishment of supervisory councils and regulatory authorities was presented as a response to the perceived destabilizing force of fabricated narratives. Yet these measures, while intended to safeguard national security, simultaneously expanded punitive oversight, thereby constraining journalistic independence and narrowing the space for dissent. The cause lay in official anxieties over misinformation while the effect was the institutionalization of surveillance and control across digital and social media platforms.

Judicial interventions based on civil society activism followed as a consequence of this regulatory momentum. International and domestic rulings against media outlets and individuals were justified as necessary to preserve 'credibility and order'. However, the severity of custodial sentences and the interrogation of vague statutory definitions revealed how the judiciary's engagement, itself prompted by proliferating digital disputes, deepened concerns about the proportionality and due process. Ambiguous legal categories, designed to counter allegedly fabricated news, had the effect of enabling selective enforcement and converting regulation into instruments of suppression of freedom of expression.

The erosion of journalistic precision further compounded these dynamics. Retractions and apologies by prominent journalists, triggered by the circulation of unverified claims, weakened public trust in media reliability. Regulatory reprimands and international denunciations of unauthorized content were direct consequences of these lapses, reinforcing perceptions of fragility within the information sphere. The acceleration of AI-driven misinformation, itself a cause rooted in technological innovation, produced the effect of heightened confusion and blurred distinctions between authentic and synthetic content, thereby magnifying the vulnerability of audiences to manipulation.

Hate speech, refracted through partisan loyalties and national security discourse, illustrated another chain of cause and effect. Official assertions that most social media reportage was deceptive legitimized expansive crackdowns while attempts to proscribe channels and accounts revealed selective enforcement. The conflation of dissent, propaganda and hate speech, caused by imprecise definitions and politicized framing, had the effect of delegitimizing adversaries and corroding confidence in authentic anti-hate narratives. The India-Pakistan military confrontation in May 2025 provided a vivid example: the cause was

the eruption of armed conflict and the effect was an information flow saturated by fabricated visuals, recycled footage and sensational headlines that distorted public understanding of actual unfolding developments.

The cumulative effect of these developments was the consolidation of state authority over digital discourse, the judiciary's contested role in defining its boundaries and the media's continued struggle to maintain credibility amid technological disruption.

2a – Disinformation-related cases

Expanded state oversight

In the period under review, an intensification of state efforts to confront disinformation was observed, underscoring rising institutional unease over the destabilizing force of digital fabrications. In June 2025, federal authorities, working in tandem with the Punjab provincial administration, broadened social media monitoring. An 18-member supervisory council was convened to identify and suppress what officials termed “incendiary narratives”²⁶. A parliamentary committee, in September 2025, voiced discontent with what it labelled “inadequate” measures against journalist Rizwan Razi of Pakistan Television, pressing for a professional prohibition over remarks seen as ethnically disparaging against the Sindhi community²⁷.

The momentum persisted into November 2025, when Information Minister Attaullah Tarar advanced the creation of a formal digital media authority designed to reinforce accountability structures across online platforms²⁸. In parallel, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi declared a comprehensive campaign against falsified online content, cautioning that digital misinformation had reached critical inflection points²⁹. This discourse resonated with global apprehensions as highlighted in a 2025 Reuters Institute report noting that unrestrained digital misinformation now constituted systemic threats to democratic cohesion and public confidence³⁰.

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), in February 2026, issued a public communiqué urging citizens to abstain from the circulation of unverified material online. Invoking national security concerns, officials warned that violations could precipitate legal consequences³¹. In March 2026, the Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority (SMPRA) was made functional with the appointment of its first chairman³². Collectively,

²⁶ Mukhtar, I. (June 26, 2025). Interior ministry to monitor social media for Muharram peace. *The Nation*. <https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Jun-2025/interior-ministry-to-monitor-social-media-for-muharram-peace>

²⁷ *Senate panel vows to defend citizens' dignity against hate speech*. (September 16, 2025). *The News*. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1373000>

²⁸ *Tarar for setting up 'Digital Media Association'*. (November 25, 2025). *Business Recorder*. <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40394029>

²⁹ *Naqvi vows 'massive-scale' action on online misinformation*. (December 1, 2025). *Express Tribune*. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2580010/naqvi-vows-massive-scale-action-on-online-misinformation>

³⁰ *2025 Reuters Institute Digital News Report: Eroding Public Trust, Growing Misinformation Threats, and Investigative Journalism's Appeal*. (July 10, 2025). Global Investigative Journalism Network. <https://gijn.org/stories/2025-reuters-institute-digital-news-report>

³¹ *Responsible use of social media*. (February 28, 2026). Pakistan Telecommunication Authority. <https://www.pta.gov.pk/category/responsible-use-of-social-media-264724506-2026-03-02>

³² Asad, M. (March 19, 2026). Islamabad AG Ayaz Shaukat appointed chairman of newly-established Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority. *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1983696>

these actions illustrate an emergent governance paradigm, one that increasingly elevates informational regulation as a cornerstone of national security.

Judicialization of digital speech

Parallel to executive initiatives in the period under review, the judiciary became a pivotal forum for contesting the limits of digital discourse. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz in October 2025 prevailed in a United Kingdom tribunal, which ruled against a Pakistan-based news channel for circulating fabricated claims against her. The judgement compelled a formal withdrawal and apology from the broadcaster³³.

Domestic courts were equally engaged. In January 2026, following orders from the Lahore High Court, federal cybercrime authorities arrested eight individuals accused of vilifying online campaigns against senior judges³⁴. Also, in July 2025, an Islamabad tribunal imposed 17-year custodial terms on human rights lawyers Imaan Mazari and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha for social media content deemed defamatory towards government institutions³⁵. The severity of this penalty ignited debate within legal and journalistic circles over proportionality and due process.

Judicial oversight deepened further in February 2026, when the Islamabad High Court interrogated the definitional vagueness of “fabricated news” under revised cybercrime statutes. Journalists had earlier warned that such provisions risked legal weaponization, as the Committee to Protect Journalist (CPJ) cautioned in March 2025 that ambiguous legal definitions risk converting legitimate regulation into instruments of suppression³⁶.

Erosion of media credibility

The review period was marked by recurrent breaches of journalistic precision, raising doubts about the durability of media credibility. In July 2025, journalist Aizaz Syed withdrew a claim regarding a visit by United States President Donald Trump to Pakistan³⁷. August 2025 brought further disputes. A journalist from a leading English-language daily apologized for wrongly accusing a former colleague of exploiting official housing perks³⁸ and columnist Suhail Warraich faced official reprimand for allegedly fabricating details of a meeting with senior military leadership abroad³⁹.

³³ *Private news channel issues apology to Maryam Nawaz after UK defamation case.* (October 21, 2025). Pakistan Today. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/10/21/private-news-channel-issues-apology-to-maryam-nawaz-after-uk-defamation-case>

³⁴ *Eight arrested in Lahore for defaming judges on social media.* (January 15, 2026). Dunya News. <https://dunya.com.pk/News/929733-eight-arrested-in-lahore-for-defaming-judges-on-social-media>

³⁵ Asad, M. (January 24, 2026). Day after dramatic arrest, Imaan and Hadi handed jail sentence in controversial social media posts case. Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1968788>

³⁶ *CPJ warns of self-censorship risk after law minister's remarks on foreign policy coverage.* (March 13, 2026). Pakistan Today. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/03/13/cpj-warns-of-self-censorship-risk-after-law-ministers-remarks-on-foreign-policy-coverage>

³⁷ Aizaz Syed apologizes after Geo News airs false report on Donald Trump's visit to Pakistan. (July 17, 2025). Journalism Pakistan. <https://www.journalismpakistan.com/azaz-syed-apologizes-after-geo-news-airs-false-report-on-donald-trumps-visit-to-pakistan>

³⁸ *Dawn journalist issues apology after naming Fahd Hussain by mistake.* (August 5, 2025). Journalism Pakistan. <https://www.journalismpakistan.com/dawn-journalist-issues-apology-after-naming-fahd-husain-by-mistake>

³⁹ *Suhail Warraich clarifies column on army chief's remarks amid ISPR rebuttal.* (August 26, 2025). Pakistan Press Foundation. <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/suhail-warraich-clarifies-column-on-army-chiefs-remarks-amid-ispr-rebuttal>

International actions were not exempt; the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) denounced the unauthorized use of its insignia by a Pakistan-based digital outlet⁴⁰. Regulatory authorities also intervened. In December 2025, the national broadcast regulator referred a political news show to its complaints council over unverified allegations⁴¹. The challenge was compounded by technological acceleration. A 2025 report by the Karachi-based Center of Excellence in Journalism (CEJ) described the year as a watershed, marked by the sophistication of AI-driven misinformation⁴².

2b – Hate speech-related cases

Politicized hate speech

Hate speech within Pakistan’s digital realm is seldom regarded as a neutral construct; rather, it is refracted through partisan political loyalties. In the period under review, numerous accounts underscored this dynamic. The June 2025 attempt to proscribe 27 YouTube channels by Pakistan-based information and media practitioners illustrated the pattern, as the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) characterized them as “provocative” despite their content being largely political critique⁴³.

In December 2025, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi’s assertion that “90 percent of social media reportage was deceptive” further entrenched an atmosphere where delegitimizing political adversaries became effortless⁴⁴.

However, during and after the May 2025, the India-Pakistan military confrontation, hyper-nationalist discourse fueled hate rhetoric including what could be termed as discriminatory towards subscribers of a religious belief⁴⁵. This asymmetrical application indicated that the contours of “hate” fluctuated with the identity of the speaker and its intended target, rendering enforcement selective and corroding confidence in authentic anti-hate narratives.

The security lens of online rhetoric

Hate speech across Pakistan’s news and social media landscape is often filtered through the prism of national security. Reports during the review period suggested how authorities framed militant propaganda from groups such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) as both a security threat and a form of dangerous speech⁴⁶.

⁴⁰ *BBC intensifies fight against fake channels in Pakistan as ‘Bhai Bhai Channel’ pleads for YouTube revival.* (August 31, 2025). Journalism Pakistan. <https://www.journalismpakistan.com/bbc-intensifies-fight-against-fake-channels-in-pakistan-as-bhai-bhai-channel-pleads-for-youtube-revival>

⁴¹ *PEMRA refers Aaj News episode to Council of Complaints.* (December 9, 2025). Journalism Pakistan. <https://www.journalismpakistan.com/pemra-refers-aaj-news-episode-to-council-of-complaints>

⁴² *AI-led misinformation reshaped digital landscape in 2025: report.* (January 13, 2026). Dunya News. <https://dunya.com/en/Technology/929212-ai-led-misinformation-reshaped-digital-landscape-in-2025-report>

⁴³ Shahzad, A. (July 11, 2025). Pakistan court suspends order seeking YouTube ban on government critics. *Reuters.* <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/pakistan-court-suspends-order-seeking-youtube-ban-government-critics-2025-07-11/>

⁴⁴ *Interior minister vows massive action on social media, terms 90% of online news ‘fake’.* (December 2, 2025). Express Tribune. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2580114/90-online-news-is-fake-says-naqvi>

⁴⁵ *Escalate: Social Media War during the India-Pakistan conflict, April-May 2025.* Foundation the London Story. https://thelondonstory.org/wp-content/uploads/ESCALATE_TLS-1.pdf

⁴⁶ *Pakistan urges global social media platforms to block accounts run by banned militant groups.* (July 25, 2025). The Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-social-media-militants-accounts-3f5ee499daf547d2782979b8d8ee8162>

In response, social media platforms were asked by the authorities to suspend hundreds of accounts, including 481 until July 2025, with officials stressing the risks posed by online rhetoric⁴⁷. However, this framing also extended to dissenting voices, whose opinion was at times portrayed as inciting hostility towards institutions. The result is a blurred category in which dissent, propaganda, and genuine hate speech converge, allowing real threats to be addressed but also enabling the restriction of dissenting expression under the same justification.

State response to incendiary expression

In the period under review, visible measures were undertaken by state authorities to restrain hate speech, yet the outcomes remained controversial at best. The October 2025 crackdown in Punjab targeting Tehrik Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), which resulted in over a hundred arrests and numerous blocked accounts, signaled a readiness to confront incendiary content⁴⁸. Critics, however, contended that enforcement was opaque and prone to selective use.

Amendments to the PECA law broadened the scope of punishable speech to include imprecise categories such as “offensive” material, creating space for both genuine regulation and potential misuse⁴⁹. Overall, the state’s strategy reflected a precarious balance between curbing harmful expression and consolidating authority, complicating the pursuit of consistent and credible anti-hate frameworks.

2c –War related disinformation

In May 2025, the military clash between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan unfolded not only through four days of aerial bombardments and border incursions but also through a parallel struggle over perception, where accuracy was quickly sacrificed. As tensions mounted, both social media platforms and mainstream outlets were saturated with unsubstantiated stories, sensational headlines, and AI-crafted illusions that traveled far beyond the actual fighting⁵⁰.

Global coverage later revealed torrents of misleading material emerging from both sides, often recycling footage from unrelated wars or presenting doctored visuals as breaking news. For instance, Indian broadcasters aired claims of attacks on a Pakistani nuclear installation, the seizure of Islamabad and the destruction of advanced jets – none of which were confirmed and all of which were later disproven by independent verifiers⁵¹.

At the same time, Pakistani accounts circulated clips from video games and unrelated military footage, which spread widely amid the haze of the conflict, underscoring how swiftly unverified imagery online can be mistaken for fact.

⁴⁷ Govt urges social media firms to block accounts run by terrorist groups. (July 25, 2025). Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1926532>

⁴⁸ Over a hundred social media users arrested for inflammatory content. (October 24, 2025). Digital Rights Foundation. <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/over-a-hundred-social-media-users-arrested-for-inflammatory-content>

⁴⁹ Zafar, P. & A, Sajjad. (November 18, 2025). The PECA Amendment 2025: A critical analysis. Shaikh Ahmad Hassan School of Law. <https://sahsol.lums.edu.pk/node/25604>

⁵⁰ Dubey, S. & Gilani, M. (May 13, 2025). No truce in India-Pakistan disinformation war. *AFP Fact Check*. <https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.46FY6WE>

⁵¹ Fact-check exposes Indian media’s fabricated reports on Indo-Pak conflict. (May 10, 2025). The Business Standard. <https://www.tbsnews.net/world/south-asia/fact-check-exposes-indian-medias-fabricated-reports-indo-pak-conflict-1138706>

The sheer velocity and abundance of digital and linear falsehoods exposed deeper weaknesses in the information sphere. International papers such as *The Washington Post* noted that even established Indian networks succumbed to inaccuracies, with reporters admitting that fabricated stories dominated broadcasts and distorted public understanding⁵². Analysts also stressed that AI and deepfake technology played a novel role in heightening confusion, erasing boundaries between authentic recordings and synthetic creations⁵³. These fabricated media pieces were shared without context, making immediate verification very difficult.

News agencies like AFP and Reuters catalogued numerous examples⁵⁴ where footage from conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East was repurposed to depict dramatic events along the Indo-Pakistan frontier⁵⁵. The deliberate withholding of confirmed information by official sources, combined with the aggressive circulation of unsubstantiated claims online, meant audiences on both sides were immersed in a cacophony of partisan interpretations, reportedly amplified by algorithms⁵⁶.

Observers concluded that in modern confrontations, the battle over information is as consequential as the physical fighting, shaping domestic opinion, influencing diplomatic stances and complicating peace and fact-checking efforts⁵⁷.

⁵² Mehrotra, K. (June 4, 2025). How misinformation overtook Indian newsrooms amid conflict with Pakistan. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/06/04/india-news-channels-misinformation-pakistan-conflict/>

⁵³ Rajoka, Q. S. (January 29, 2026). Disinformation and deepfakes: Improving crisis communications in India and Pakistan. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <https://thebulletin.org/2026/01/disinformation-and-deepfakes-improving-crisis-communications-in-india-and-pakistan>

⁵⁴ Kumar, R. (May 29, 2025). How Indian fact-checkers debunked false claims during the India-Pakistan crisis. Reuters Institute. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/truth-casualty-how-indian-fact-checkers-debunked-false-claims-during-india-pakistan-crisis>

⁵⁵ No truce in India-Pakistan disinformation war. (May 13, 2025). Plataforma. <https://www.plataformamedia.com/en/2025/05/13/no-truce-in-india-pakistan-disinformation-war>

⁵⁶ Missiles and Misinformation: False claims about the India-Pakistan clashes reach millions on X. (June 10, 2025). Institute for Strategic Dialogue. <https://www.isdglobal.org/digital-dispatch/missiles-and-misinformation-false-claims-about-the-india-pakistan-clashes-reach-millions-on-x>

⁵⁷ Khan, N. (June 2, 2025). The information crisis that brought India and Pakistan to the brink. Tech Policy. <https://www.techpolicy.press/the-information-crisis-that-brought-india-and-pakistan-to-the-brink>

Safety of journalists and other media practitioners

The period in review indicated a sustained pattern of pressure on the media ecosystem in Pakistan driven primarily by the deployment of legal coercion alongside persistent intimidation and periodic physical violence. Of the 129 verified incidents recorded nationwide, legal violations formed the largest category: threats of legal action (37 cases) and actual legal action (21 cases) together accounted for 58 cases, underscoring how procedural and judicial mechanisms are repeatedly used to deter reporting and constrain editorial independence. The second most frequent category was harm, including assaults causing injury (16 cases) and non-lethal threats of harm (11 cases), totaling 27 cases. Collectively, these categories represented 85 incidents (65.9%) of all documented violations indicating that the operating environment for journalists is shaped by a combined dynamic of legal pressure and coercive threats, with violence reinforcing the chilling effect of formal actions.

3a. Violations against journalists and other media practitioners

Detailed monitoring and verification of cases of violations against media and its practitioners in Pakistan in the period May 2025 to March 2026, conducted by Freedom Network, reveals a sustained pattern of pressure on the media ecosystem, dominated by legal coercion and intimidation with recurring instances of physical violence.

Largest categories of violations against journalists: legal actions and harm: In terms of two broad categories of analysis – geographic distribution of cases and media-format distribution of cases, the highest violation type emerged as **legal**. These included **threat of legal action** (37 cases) and **actual legal action**, making a total of **58 cases** out of total 129 violations documented.

The second most frequent category of violation was **harm**. This included **assault resulting in injury** (16 cases) and **threat of harm** [non-murder] (11 cases) – a total of **27 cases** out of 129 violations documented.

Taken together, these four sub-categories of violations accounted for **85 out of 129** (or 65.9%) of all documented journalist violations cases in all the various geographic regions of Pakistan, signaling that the primary operating environment for media practitioners is shaped by a combined dynamic of **legal pressure plus coercive threats and violence**.

The most dangerous regions in Pakistan for journalists: Geographically, most of these violations were concentrated in **Punjab** (52 cases of 40.3%) with **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** second (30 cases, or 23.3%) – with together comprise nearly **two-thirds (63.6%)** of the recorded cases.

Islamabad (21 cases, or 16.3%) was the third largest cluster of violations while Balochistan (11 cases, or 8.5%), Sindh (9 cases, or 7%), AJK (5 cases, or 3.9%) and GB (1 case, or 0.8%) accounted for the remaining shares.

This distribution suggests that the geographic risk for Pakistani journalists was not uniform: major population and governance centers show elevated incident frequency, while smaller totals in other regions may reflect both lower incident rates and the possibility of under-reporting or reduced documentation capacity.

The severity profile of violations remained mixed. While most entries fell under categories of legal actions, threats or harassment, there were also two murders and five attempted murders documented, underscoring that the threat landscape includes lethal and near-lethal incidents even if these are less frequent than other categories.

Arrests (8 cases) and detentions (7 cases) further reinforce a pattern in which restrictions on liberty complement broader legal intimidation, with the apparent effect of discouraging reporting through both procedural and coercive means.

The most frequent mediums targeted: The data indicated violations against media practitioners were most frequently associated with journalists working for **television** (47 cases) and **print** (42 cases), with a substantial **internet or digital based** component (34 cases). This indicates that high-visibility mainstream outlets and online journalism remain key exposure points for retaliation and legal action against journalists and other media practitioners.

The biggest threat actors targeting journalists in Pakistan: State authorities and functionaries emerged as the biggest threat actor against journalists and other media practitioners in Pakistan in terms of both frequency and severity in the period under review.

They accounted for 82 of 129 cases (63.6%) of violations against media, including contributing to the largest share of high-harm outcomes (30 of 53 severe cases, or 56.6%), largely through *legal and custodial* actions. This included actual legal action (21 cases), threats of legal action (28 cases), arrests (7 cases), detentions (6 cases) and assault (including assault with injury 9 cases and assault without injury 4 cases).

Non-state actors emerged as the second most dangerous group for journalists, with a stronger tilt toward direct physical harm. They account for 24 of 129 cases (18.6%) and 15 of 53 severe cases (28.3%), including murder/attempted murder (2 cases), assault (8 cases), and threats to murder (5 cases).

Other threat actors posing risks included “Unknown perpetrators” with 14 cases (10.9%), “political parties” with 6 cases (4.7%), “criminal gangs” with 2 cases (1.6%) and “others” with 1 case (0.8%).

3b – Key cases of violations against journalists and media practitioners

In the review period, Pakistan experienced a marked deterioration in conditions for independent journalism, with reporters subjected to lethal violence, arbitrary detention, intimidation, and sweeping judicial restrictions.

Murders: At least three journalists were killed in 2025 in incidents ostensibly tied to their work. These included:

- **A. D. Shar of Hum News TV:** He was shot dead by armed men in the Thar, Sindh, on April 15, 2025.
- **Abdul Latif Baloch of Aaj News:** He was murdered inside his home in Awaran, Balochistan, by unidentified masked assailants on May 24, 2025.
- **Imtiaz Mir of Metro 1 TV:** He was gunned down by unidentified assailants in his vehicle in Karachi, Sindh, on September 21, 2025.

Detentions: In December 2025, digital reporter Sohrab Barkat was detained under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) for alleged critical commentary before being released over ninety days later⁵⁸. In March 2026, three female journalists – Farhat Fatima (APP), Ismat Jabeen (DW Urdu), and Sehrish Qureshi (Independent Urdu) were arrested while attempting to cover and attend a scheduled *Aurat March* event in Islamabad⁵⁹.

Judicial actions: In July 2025, courts ordered the blocking of 27 channels and online accounts for allegedly anti-state content, with some rulings later suspended by a higher court⁶⁰. In January 2026, a court in Islamabad sentenced at least two social media commentators – Adil Raja and Syed Akbar Hussain – and four journalists – Moeed Pirzada, Sabir Shakir, Shaheen Sehbai and Wajahat Saeed Khan – in absentia to life imprisonment on terrorism-related charges⁶¹. Rights groups condemned the verdicts as politically repressive and lacking due process, noting that many of those convicted were abroad and had not been formally notified of proceedings.

⁵⁸ *Pakistani journalist Sohrab Barkat detained over interview with opposition politician.* (December 2, 2025). Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2025/12/pakistani-journalist-sohrab-barakat-detained-over-interview-with-opposition-politician/>

⁵⁹ *Three journalists detained ahead of International Women's Day march.* (March 10, 2026). International Federation of Journalists. <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/pakistan-three-journalists-detained-ahead-of-international-womens-day-march>

⁶⁰ *Court suspends ban on 27 YouTube channels, slams lack of due process.* (July 11, 2025). Journalism Pakistan. <https://www.journalismpakistan.com/court-suspends-ban-on-27-youtube-channels-slams-lack-of-due-process>

⁶¹ Asad, M. (January 2, 2026). Islamabad ATC hands double life sentences to YouTuber Adil Raja, 6 others for ‘waging war against Pakistan’. *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1964657>

Assaults: In May 2025, social media commentator Atish Mehsud narrowly survived an armed attack in North Waziristan after exposing corruption. That same month, Nasrullah Khattak in Charsadda and Bilal Habib in Multan were assaulted while reporting. In September 2025, Bol News senior reporter Tayyab Baloch, News One journalist Faisal Hakim, and correspondent Ejaz Ahmed were beaten by political party supporters at a press event. Around the same time, gunmen opened fire on the residence of ARY News correspondent Ihsan Khattak in Bannu.

International organizations expressed growing alarm at these violations. In early 2026, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), joined by over a dozen other rights groups, urged Pakistan's leadership to safeguard freedom of expression and protect media workers⁶². Global indices reinforced these concerns: a 2025 impunity ranking and press freedom assessments placed Pakistan among countries where killings, assaults, detentions and judicial harassment of journalists persist with minimal accountability⁶³.

⁶² Committee to Protect Journalists. (February 25, 2026). <https://cpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Joint-CSO-Letter-to-Pakistan-PM-.pdf>

⁶³ Rehmat, A. & Khattak, I. (November 2025). Impunity Report 2025. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Impunity-Report-2025.pdf>

State of media and freedom of expression in the regions of Pakistan

Freedom of expression in Pakistan is guaranteed by Article 19 of the Constitution, yet the daily reality for journalists across its provinces and territories reveals a landscape of intimidation, censorship, economic fragility and systemic neglect.

Institutional power and legal shackles

In recent years, including the period under review, state institutions have emerged among the most consistent threat actors. In Central Punjab⁶⁴, police cases are lodged on flimsy grounds, creating a chilling effect on local reporting. In North Punjab⁶⁵, covert interventions including phone calls, visits and legal complaints are designed to deter publication. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa⁶⁶, intelligence agencies weaponize the PECA law, particularly its vague defamation clauses, to intimidate reporters covering military operations or enforced disappearances. Balochistan⁶⁷ reflects similar patterns, where the state acknowledges its responsibility to protect journalists but fails to implement effective mechanisms, leaving reporters vulnerable to both militants and security forces.

Legislation has become a frontline tool of suppression. The Punjab Defamation Act of 2024 introduced special tribunals and fines up to Rs 3 million, raising costs and chilling investigations before they begin. Amendments to PECA in 2025 expanded the scope of “fake information” clauses, making it easy to accuse journalists and difficult to defend against charges. In Azad Jammu and Kashmir⁶⁸, laws have been broadened to include government figures within the definition of “community,” enabling imprisonment for criticism and effectively criminalizing dissent.

Militants, mafias and shadow controls

Journalists also face formidable pressure from non-state actors. In KP, militant organizations

⁶⁴ Shahab, M. & Rehmat, A. (October 28, 2025). Journalism in Central Punjab. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/FINAL-DESIGN-Central-Punjab-Media-Assessment-Report-2025.pdf>

⁶⁵ Shahab, M. & Rehmat, A. (October 28, 2025). Journalism in North Punjab. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/FINAL-North-Punjab-Media-Assessment-Report-2025.pdf>

⁶⁶ Rehmat, A. & Khattak, I. (October 30, 2025). Impunity Report 2025. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Impunity-Report-2025.pdf>

⁶⁷ Khan, A. (December 28, 2025). Journalism in Balochistan. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Balochistan-Media-Assessment-Report-2025-Updated.pdf>

⁶⁸ Rehmat, A. & Khattak, I. (September 17, 2025). Journalism in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Journalism-in-AJK-Report-2025.pdf>

such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) issue public warnings, demand favorable coverage and carry out targeted attacks. In Balochistan, separatist groups suspend newspaper distribution and threaten media houses that fail to align with their messaging. Gilgit-Baltistan presents a different dynamic, where extremist religious organizations and land mafias intimidate journalists reporting on terrorism or property disputes. South Punjab⁶⁹ is marked by sectarian groups and extremist networks that retaliate against independent reporting through threats, abductions, and violence.

Criminal networks compound these risks. Narcotics dealers in Central Punjab have attacked journalists' offices, while kidnap-for-ransom gangs in southern KP retaliate against investigative reporting on trafficking routes. In Sindh, dacoit gangs in riverine areas provide shelter to fugitives and pose new threats, with the murder⁷⁰ of Jan Muhammad Meher in 2023 believed to be linked to such networks.

Fragile livelihoods and media economics of media workers

Financial insecurity is perhaps the most pervasive threat across regions. In Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), journalists often receive no salary at all, covering multiple districts without compensation. In Balochistan, salaries are not only lower than in other provinces but frequently delayed for months due to government advertising quotas. Gilgit-Baltistan presents similar challenges, where even prominent media houses have failed to pay staff for years. In KP, wage delays of up to two months are routine, with salaries as low as twelve thousand rupees – well below provincial minimum wage thresholds. In Punjab, many journalists working with major channels receive no salary, relying instead on parallel businesses or tokenistic media cards. Sindh mirrors these conditions, where salary delays are widespread and district correspondents are told to “find alternatives” themselves.

The media economy's dependence on government advertising exacerbates structural weaknesses. In AJK, local outlets rely almost entirely on the Press Information Department (PID) for revenue, while in Balochistan, federal quotas are absorbed by national bureaus, leaving regional newspapers starved of funds. South Punjab's print media has historically survived on government advertisements, but this support has dwindled, forcing newspapers to redirect resources to digital platforms. The selective denial of government advertisements, such as the long-standing ban on Dawn, illustrates how financial suffocation becomes a potent form of censorship.

Job insecurity compounds these vulnerabilities. Abrupt dismissals in KP, thousands of layoffs in South Punjab and media bureau closures in Sindh reflect a profession marked by precarity. District correspondents face some of the harshest conditions, often expected to generate revenue themselves or even contribute money to media houses.

⁶⁹ Rehmat, A. & Khattak, I. (July 10, 2025). Journalism in South Punjab. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/South-Punjab-Media-Assessment-Report-2024.pdf>

⁷⁰ *JIT formed to probe journalist's murder as Sukkur police claim arresting two suspects*. (August 17, 2023). Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1770473>

Layers of censorship and surveillance

Censorship in Pakistan manifests in diverse and extreme forms. In KP, directives from security institutions prohibit coverage of militant attacks, civilian casualties and enforced disappearances, mandating reliance on official statements. In Central Punjab, defamation cases and PECA provisions have entrenched self-censorship. In Gilgit-Baltistan, despite the absence of formal jurisdiction, regulatory authorities intervene to restrict channels, while licenses for television and FM stations are issued from Islamabad, denying local autonomy.

Militant-imposed censorship adds another layer. In KP's merged tribal districts, factions of TTP have issued edicts banning "anti-jihad" content, threatening journalists with violence. In Balochistan, banned organizations bypass local media entirely, sending claims directly to international outlets, reflecting the silencing of domestic voices.

Digital platforms, once seen as spaces for relative freedom, are increasingly subject to surveillance and algorithmic suppression. In AJK, Kashmiri voices are silenced by international platforms whose algorithms prioritize state narratives. GB journalists highlight how firewalls filter out critical issues, reducing the reach of digital media. Connectivity blackouts exacerbate these challenges. Balochistan has witnessed repeated internet shutdowns, sometimes lasting months, while KP saw mobile data services suspended in multiple districts during 2025. These measures shrink spaces for independent voices, isolating communities and reinforcing censorship.

Violence, litigation and coercion

Extreme forms of censorship are enforced through violence and intimidation. In Sindh, the murder of senior journalist Jan Muhammad Meher exemplifies the high cost of free speech. South Punjab records numerous cases of assaults, threats, arrests and murders between 2021 and 2025. In AJK, women journalists report harassment and character assassination, further discouraging participation. Across regions, threats are often unreported, leaving journalists vulnerable and investigations stalled.

Legal coercion compounds these dangers. Charges of treason, terrorism or public order violations have been initiated against journalists in Pakistan documenting protests and accountability movements. Defamation suits seeking exorbitant damages raise defense costs and compress procedural safeguards. Amendments to criminal provisions expand the scope of "public tranquility" and "obstruction of official duties," shifting criticism into a penal frame. The amended PECA law has become central to punitive enforcement against online speech, with penalties magnified to ten years' imprisonment for alleged "disinformation." Communication controls, including mobile network shutdowns in Balochistan and KP, further impede journalistic work.

Economic strangulation operates alongside legal threats. In areas where private advertising markets are weak, media outlets rely on government advertising, creating a lever for punitive withdrawal. Harassment often extends beyond the newsroom to family livelihoods, illustrating

how punitive logic crosses personal-professional boundaries. Physical and psychological intimidation, including beatings, torture, and enforced disappearances, reflect an environment where coercion is normalized and accountability diffused.

Social pressures and fragmented solidarity

Socio-cultural dynamics further complicate the media landscape. In AJK, caste affiliations determine reactions to reporting, with journalists judged through the lens of their community identity. In GB, ethnic and sectarian divides amplify risks, with reporters warned not to cover certain areas or topics. Sectarian tensions across GB and South Punjab create hostile environments where even honest opinions can provoke violence. Gender exclusion is particularly stark in Punjab, where women journalists are largely absent from press clubs and denied assignments.

Internal divisions within the journalist community weaken collective resistance. The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists has at least four factions, diluting solidarity and leaving many journalists isolated. Press clubs, intended to safeguard rights, are themselves subject to politicization and administrative control. In Balochistan, local administrations restricted political parties from organizing events at press clubs, only reversed after judicial intervention. In Sindh, Hyderabad Press Club was attacked multiple times by religious groups during protests. These assaults on collective spaces erode solidarity and reinforce vulnerability.

Status of women in Pakistani media

In the period under review, women journalists in Pakistan continued to navigate a perilous professional landscape where harassment, online abuse and censorship converged to erode both personal security and press freedom. Their experiences in 2025-26 reveal how gendered vulnerabilities intersected with broader state, workplace, and societal pressures.

Press freedom – gendered risks

The reporting period was marred by a succession of troubling episodes that undermined women journalists' ability to carry out their professional duties independently. A case⁷¹ of workplace harassment was publicly reported by former *Pakistan Television* employee Mahjabeen Abid in July 2025, claiming professional retaliation at the hands of a former male colleague. Two months later, in September 2025, *Dunya News* anchorperson Meher Bokhari revealed that her private bank accounts had been inexplicably frozen⁷² – an act she suggested was intended to pressure her family, particularly given that her husband, journalist Kashif Abbasi, had been off-air since January 2025. November 2025 brought another blow when a manipulated deepfake video of reporter Benazir Shah circulated⁷³ widely on social media platform X, subjecting her to unwarranted online abuse. In February 2026, media circles were again shaken as journalist Nasim Zehra's news program on *Channel 24* was abruptly pulled⁷⁴ from broadcast without explanation.

Women journalists, much like their male peers in Pakistan, continued to bear the brunt of the state's unrelenting application of the PECA law. In August 2025, four female members of the National Press Club in Islamabad were charged⁷⁵ under the Act, allegedly for the contents of a private WhatsApp group chat. In March 2026, the clampdown intensified as three women journalists, including Farhat Fatima, Sehrish Qureshi and Ismat Jabeen, along with several demonstrators, were detained⁷⁶ and subjected to torture without charge while attempting to attend and cover Islamabad's annual *Aurat March* gathering.

⁷¹ *PTV harassment victim silenced while accused official reappointed in Multan*. (July 18, 2025). Rural Media Network Pakistan. <https://ruralmedianetworkpk.org/ptv-harassment-victim-silenced-while-accused-official-reappointed-in-multan/>

⁷² *Bank account of journalist Kashif Abbasi's wife Mehr Bokhari frozen*. (September 17, 2025). Rural Media Network Pakistan. <https://ruralmedianetworkpk.org/bank-account-of-journalist-kashif-abbasi-wife-mehr-bokhari-frozen/>

⁷³ *Benazir Shah targeted in deepfake, Information Minister vows action*. (November 17, 2025). Express Tribune. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2577858/benazir-shah-targeted-in-deepfake-information-minister-vows-action>

⁷⁴ *Senior Pakistani anchor Nasim Zehra off air, reports say*. (February 2, 2026). Journalism Pakistan. <https://www.journalismpakistan.com/senior-pakistani-anchor-nasim-zehra-off-air-reports-say/>

⁷⁵ *PECA case targets women journalists in WhatsApp group*. (August 22, 2025). International Federation of Journalists. <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/pakistan-peca-case-targets-women-journalists-in-whatsapp-group>

⁷⁶ Saeed, R. & Ahmed, R. U. (March 14, 2026). Authorities push back against International Women's Day march in Pakistan. *Global Voices*. https://globalvoices.org/2026/03/14/authorities-push-back-against-international-womens-day-march-in-pakistan/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Disparities and representation across regions

Across Pakistan, women journalists remained sidelined by entrenched structures that render their presence almost symbolic. Freedom Network, throughout the reporting period, released independent regional assessment reports, in collaboration with International Media Support (IMS), that described and analyzed the state of media freedoms, access to information and safety of journalists across the country's diverse regions.

In Gilgit-Baltistan⁷⁷, despite the presence of media degree programs, only a handful of women entered the profession – two working full-time out of more than two thousand union members. In AJK⁷⁸, representation is similarly tokenistic: five women among 85 journalists, with harassment and cultural stigma further eroding participation. South Punjab⁷⁹ reflected the same patriarchal script – women confined to so-called 'soft beats', paid less than men and sometimes subjected to workplace harassment.

Balochistan's⁸⁰ picture is bleaker still: fewer than ten women graduates in two decades have entered journalism, those remaining often face mob violence and delayed salaries. Central Punjab⁸¹ showed modest gains, with women elected to executive positions of press clubs. These regional snapshots converge on a single truth: women's voices in Pakistan's media are systematically muted.

The Global Media Monitoring Project 2025⁸² underscored this exclusion. While women globally appear in roughly a quarter of news stories, Pakistan's figure has collapsed to just four percent, down from 16 percent five years earlier.

Glimmers of progress

Amid the challenges, a few developments signaled progress. In March 2025, Freedom Network released *From Margins to Mainstream*, a report⁸³ that not only documented women's exclusion from press clubs and journalist unions but also proposed reforms such as reserved seats, inclusive policies and recognition of digital journalists. That same month, public debate intensified around the inadequacy⁸⁴ of national cybercrime laws in addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women in media.

⁷⁷ Rehmat, A. & Khattak, I. (June 26, 2025). Journalism in Gilgit Baltistan. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Journalism-In-Gilgit-Baltistan-1.pdf>

⁷⁸ Rehmat, A. & Khattak, I. (September 17, 2025). Journalism in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Journalism-in-AJK-Report-2025.pdf>

⁷⁹ Rehmat, A. & Khattak, I. (July 10, 2025). Journalism in South Punjab. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/South-Punjab-Media-Assessment-Report-2024.pdf>

⁸⁰ Khan, A. (December 28, 2025). Journalism in Balochistan. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Balochistan-Media-Assessment-Report-2025-Updated.pdf>

⁸¹ Shahab, M. & Rehmat, A. (October 28, 2025). Journalism in Central Punjab. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/FINAL-DESIGN-Central-Punjab-Media-Assessment-Report-2025.pdf>

⁸² *Media monitor reports continued underrepresentation of women, highlights potential of digital platforms*. (February 13, 2026). Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1972916>

⁸³ Shahab, M. (March 8, 2025). From Margins to Mainstream: Women Representation in Press Clubs and Unions in Pakistan. *Freedom Network*. <https://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/From-Margins-to-Mainstream-Women-Representation-in-Press-Club-1.pdf>

⁸⁴ Beal, K. (March 5, 2026). Why Pakistan's cybersecurity law will not help women journalists. *International IDEA*. <https://www.idea.int/news/why-pakistans-cybersecurity-law-will-not-help-women-journalists>

January 2026 marked a milestone when Ambreen Jan became the first woman appointed⁸⁵ to steer the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), a symbolic but welcome step in regulatory leadership. In March, the Digital Media Alliance of Pakistan (DigiMAP), a grouping on independent digital media-only news platforms, completed its *From Presence to Power* initiative⁸⁶, equipping women digital media journalists with leadership training and enhanced professional capacity.

These efforts signaled that while systemic barriers remain, the push for equity in media is beginning to take shape.

⁸⁵ Ali, K. (January 3, 2026). Ambreen Jan becomes first woman to head Pemra. *Dawn*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1964833>

⁸⁶ *DigiMAP concludes women's leadership pilot with national charter and regional leadership roles*. (March 1, 2026). Hazara Express. <https://en.hazaraexpressnews.org/columns/336/>

Impact of tech on Pakistani media landscape

Artificial intelligence (AI) has begun to edge its way into Pakistan’s independent journalism, not as a sweeping revolution but as a tentative experiment, the period under review indicated. Adoption is widespread in numbers yet shallow in depth – tools are present and curiosity is evident but strategic integration remains elusive. What emerged is a paradox: enthusiasm for innovation colliding with structural, linguistic and ethical barriers, leaving newsrooms caught between the promise of transformation and the reality of constraint.

Linguistic and infrastructural divides

AI readiness across the news media landscape in Pakistan is sharply constrained by language and infrastructure. Most tools are optimized for English and to a lesser extent Urdu, leaving regional-language outlets – Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto, Balochi – structurally excluded⁸⁷. This linguistic gap compounds existing marginalization, restricting both practitioners and audiences. Regional media outlets also contend with slow internet⁸⁸, outdated devices and unreliable electricity, conditions that severely limit access to cloud-based AI systems. The result is a two-tier media ecosystem: Urdu-medium and English-dominant outlets cautiously exploring AI, as regional voices remained sidelined.

Emerging opportunities

Despite these barriers, AI and new technologies were seen as promising in two domains: audience engagement and social media management. Social listening, trend detection and platform-specific repackaging were seen as fostering deeper public relationships, enhancing both credibility and revenue generation. However, few outlets have operationalized these possibilities systematically. Anecdotal evidence indicates that where AI is used effectively, it is often driven by individual initiatives rather than institutional design.

Ethical reservations

Concerns about AI- and tech-reliability, accuracy, and ethics remain pervasive. A report⁸⁹ titled

⁸⁷ Hussain, F., Komal, S., Haq, M., Rehman, N., Anwar, N., Hashmi, T. M., Khan, M. A. (December 25, 2025). Language policy in the age of artificial intelligence: Implications for Urdu and Punjabi language in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*. https://www.pjls.edu.pk/pdf_files/2025_2/1264-1275.pdf

⁸⁸ *What went wrong with Pakistan’s internet in 2025?* (January 5, 2026). Bloom Pakistan. <https://bloompakistan.com/pakistan-internet-outages-2025-record-disruptions/>

⁸⁹ Bhangu, M. A. AI & Public Interest Journalism. *Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development*. <https://www.iradapk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/AI-Public-Interest-Journalism.pdf>

AI and Public Interest Journalism highlighted risks of factual errors, cultural insensitivity and lack of contextual nuance in AI-generated content. In low-resource environment, the absence of editorial insight raised fears of misinformation, bias and erosion of public trust. While AI's speed and efficiency are valued, journalists and media practitioners remain wary of its limitations in politically sensitive or hyper-local contexts. Another concern raised in the report was the indispensability of human oversight in factchecking, narrative framing and editorial judgement with most newsrooms lacking formal protocols or ethical use guidelines.

Capacity and training needs

Capacity remains the most significant bottleneck of Pakistani media in AI adaptation. While AI use is widespread, 92 percent of respondents in a survey rated their ability to employ it effectively as low. Newsrooms across Pakistan have urged the need for foundational training on integrating AI without compromising journalistic values, alongside tools adapted for Urdu and regional languages. Preferences for training reflects these limitations: in a survey published in *AI and Public Interest Journalism*, most respondents favored in-person workshops over digital formats, citing the importance of live discussion and practical scenarios. Editors and reporters were identified as primary audiences in the report, with little emphasis on leadership or technical staff. This editorial focus will promote both structural gaps and help fill structural gaps.

Recent developments

A welcome increase in positive developments concerning AI use in Pakistan's media industry was reported in the period under review. Media Matters for Democracy introduced *Sahafat*. AI in June 2025 to familiarize journalists with AI-driven tools for editorial support⁹⁰, while the country's first voluntary standards of AI in journalism were released in November 2025 upon completion of the *Sahafi Summit* in Lahore⁹¹. Independent platforms such as *Saga Digital*, heralded as the country's inaugural AI-assisted newsroom⁹², and *Nukta*, with majority ownership now operated by *ARY Digital Network*⁹³, furthered the prominence of AI use in the industry. Some systemic frailties were also observed. In May 2025, a news report argued that the emergence of AI had "added fuel to fire" to the manipulation and virality of doctored statements and videos concerning political figures in Pakistan⁹⁴. In another example, private outlet *Dawn*, in November 2025, accidentally published an internal AI-prompt, raising alerts about the absence of established AI-use protocols⁹⁵.

⁹⁰ *Media Matters for Democracy launches 'Sahafat.AI'*. (June 30, 2025). Media Matters for Democracy. <https://mediamatters.pk/media-matters-for-democracy-launches-sahafat-ai-a-groundbreaking-initiative-to-integrate-artificial-intelligence-in-pakistani-newsrooms/>

⁹¹ *'Standards for AI in journalism' launched in Sahafi Summit*. (November 14, 2025). Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1954993>

⁹² Khuhro, D. (December 25, 2025). Would you trust Pakistan's first AI-newsroom?. *Express Tribune*. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2581109/would-you-trust-pakistans-first-ai-newsroom>

⁹³ *ARY Digital Network acquires majority stake in Nukta*. (March 8, 2026). Profit by Pakistan Today. <https://profit.pakistanoday.com.pk/2026/03/08/ary-digital-network-acquires-majority-stake-in-nukta>

⁹⁴ Mazhar, S. (May 14, 2025). When reality is manufactured: AI misinformation and the future of journalism in Pakistan. *Digital Rights Foundation*. <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/when-reality-is-manufactured/>

⁹⁵ *Dawn apologizes after AI editing prompt mistakenly published in business story*. (November 12, 2025). Journalism Pakistan. <https://www.journalismpakistan.com/dawn-apologizes-after-ai-editing-prompt-mistakenly-published-in-business-story>

Solutions to challenges: Recommendations

In the period in review, three distinct categories of challenges to journalists and other media practitioners emerged in Pakistan – safety-related threats, legal impediments and media capacity constraints. Based on findings of various published reports on the Pakistani media ecosystem, including those produced by Freedom Network, the following recommendations are proposed to address challenges in each of these categories.

Recommendations for safety of journalists

Pakistani journalists, who often stand exposed to threats and intimidation, deserve enduring structures of support that safeguard their work and their lives. This begins with institutions that do not merely train or equip them once but accompany them through the long journey of their profession, offering guidance, solidarity and resilience.

Beyond advocacy: Advocacy for freedom of expression must go beyond fleeting campaigns. When journalists and their associations are armed with knowledge, resources and capacitated to speak, they strengthen journalism. Yet advocacy alone cannot suffice without the assurance of safety. Laws and commissions designed to protect journalists must be actionalized, fortified and extended across every province and territory and given the strength to act decisively when danger looms.

Transparency as a shield: Access to information is another pillar of safety as secrecy breeds vulnerability. RTI laws must be upheld and expanded ensuring that transparency shields journalists from isolation and empowers them with facts. Shared facilities, technical training and networks with global peers can help Pakistani digital media safeguard themselves better.

Safety through solidarity: Safety also means inclusion. Women in media must find not only opportunity but protection with newsroom policies that affirm equity and environments that welcome their voices. Collaboration is also a safeguard: when press clubs, unions and civil society stand together, it strengthens journalists. Linking media with academia and industry strengthens both knowledge and survival, encouraging a support system that can resist the fraying pressures of censorship and disinformation.

Recommendations for media legal reforms

The sustainability of media in Pakistan requires sound legal frameworks that both protect and empower those who serve the public interest. Media organizations must embed safety into their very structures, adopting binding protocols that ensure journalists are shielded from harm particularly in volatile regions. Compliance with statutory obligations under the federal and provincial journalists' safety laws is not optional but a legal duty that can help secure the profession against negligence and indifference.

Ethical journalism: This must be codified and practiced with rigor. Journalists require customized trainings to ensure dignity of individuals, and to resist the lure of falsehoods. Investigative reporting, the lifeblood of accountability, requires institutional backing, with resources directed toward uncovering corruption, defending human rights and reinforcing transparency as a constitutional promise.

Digital journalism, equal protection: The digital sphere demands equal recognition under the law. As society transitions irreversibly into digital domains, media houses and journalists' unions in Pakistan must acknowledge digital journalists as full practitioners, entitled to the same rights and protections as their counterparts in print and broadcast. Legal parity is not merely symbolic but essential to ensuring that freedom of expression remains intact across platforms.

Guardianship through legal aid: Civil society, as a co-guardian of liberty, must press for legislative reform where statutes curtail speech or obstruct access to information. Advocacy for comprehensive data protection laws is vital, as is vigilant monitoring of compliance with existing safety and information regimes. Legal aid structures – hotlines, emergency teams and counsel – must be established to defend journalists against harassment and litigation ensuring that the law serves as shield rather than weapon.

Recommendations for modernizing media

Modernizing media in Pakistan requires a deliberate reimagining of newsroom practices, legal safeguards and institutional frameworks so that journalism can thrive in a rapidly evolving digital age. Independent newsrooms must begin by appointing dedicated roles charged with overseeing the responsible integration of emerging technologies.

Safeguarding editorial judgement: Ethical codes must be embedded in workflows, particularly in relation to AI-generated visuals, translations and research. Transparency protocols, audience-facing where necessary, create trust and prevent misuse. Integration of AI should be carefully scoped to practical functions while sensitive editorial decisions remain safeguarded until verification systems are legally and professionally robust. Collaboration among media outlets, through shared translation engines or verification databases, strengthens collective resilience and reduces duplication of risk.

Rooted in reality: Media development organizations must shift their focus from short-term tool training to strategic capacity building. Cohort-based programs should emphasize risk management, governance and long-term adaptation. Legal modernization also requires the creation of localized, open-access tools that reflect Pakistan's linguistic and political realities. Structured mentorships between well-resourced and emerging outlets can democratize access to AI expertise

Balanced oversight: Policymakers and regulators must resist overregulation, instead focusing on enforceable standards against deepfakes, bot-driven misinformation and other weaponized technologies. Legal protections must extend to freelancers and informal actors who often pioneer digital practices but remain most vulnerable. Independent media must be included in the drafting of governance frameworks ensuring that regulation is responsive to ground realities rather than imposed from above.

ABOUT FREEDOM NETWORK

Freedom Network is Islamabad-based independent media watchdog and development sector research, advocacy and training organization. It was established in 2013.

In 2017, Freedom Network was awarded the prestigious French Republic's "Human Rights Prize" for "its efforts for safety and protection of journalists and promotion of freedom of expression."

OUR MISSION:

To protect civil liberties, including freedom of expression and access to information, and promote an informed society that sees media as a key partner in a democratic and pluralist Pakistan.

www.fnpk.org

info@fnpk.org