

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN PAKISTAN'S JOURNALISM WORLD

# IMPUNITY REPORT 2024



**THIS REPORT INCLUDES:**

- Special report: Analyzing the killings of 151 journalists in Pakistan over 25 years
- Year in review: the most dangerous places to practice journalism in Pakistan
- Combating impunity: How courts came to the rescue of journalists in 2024
- Measuring progress: Pakistan Impunity Index 2024
- For a digital map of Pakistani journalists killed in 25 years visit [www.fnpk.org](http://www.fnpk.org)



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**Adnan Rehmat**

## Acknowledgement:

Freedom Network thanks the managers of its Safety Hubs at major press clubs across Pakistan for documenting the threats and attacks against journalists and its Program Coordinator **Faiza Hassan** for archiving and processing the information. Also contributing to the efforts in producing this report and managing its allied initiatives were **Iqbal Khattak**, **Waqas Naeem** and **Farhan Jawaid**. Freedom Network also generates monthly monitoring reports based on the same data, which are available on its website. Freedom Network has issued this annual impunity report for the past many years. However, for the first time, the 2022-23 report separately acknowledges the threats and attacks against ‘other media professionals’ (‘OMPs’). This is because Pakistan now has two laws for the protection of journalists – a national law at the federal level and a provincial law in Sindh – that both also recognize threats to media practitioners and media professionals who may not be traditional employed journalists but are threatened or attacked due to their acts of journalism or their association with news organizations in quasi-editorial or non-editorial roles. This report has been produced by Freedom Network with support from International Media Support (IMS).

**Disclaimer:** The data used and analyzed in this report was generated by the **Safety Hubs Network**, which Freedom Network helped establish and manages in partnership with the **National Press Club** in Islamabad, **Karachi Press Club**, **Lahore Press Club**, **Quetta Press Club** and **Peshawar Press Club**. 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, 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 or those reported in media. This is not necessarily an exhaustive list. The actual number of violations against journalists in Pakistan may be higher than the cases documented here.

**For a digitally interactive map of Pakistani journalists killed in 25 years, visit [www.fnpk.org](http://www.fnpk.org)**

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## Chapter 1

# MURDERS AND DEATHS MOST FOUL Media Practitioners Killed in Line of Duty in 25 Years

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The total number of journalists and other media professionals killed in the line of duty in Pakistan between January 2000 and August 2024, as verified by Freedom Network, is 151. The data included in the analysis below does not include the several other journalists and media practitioners killed in incidents reported to be not related to their work. Only cases of murders and deaths related to journalism work, as reported in media and/or verified by Freedom Network are included in this data.

### Frequency of killings

- Total number of years: 25 (or 296 months)
- Average killed per year: About 12
- Average killed per month: About 1

### Ratio of killings by gender

- Total journalists and other media professionals killed: 151
- Male journalists and other media professionals killed: 148 > 98%
- Female journalists and other media professionals killed: 3 > 2%

### Ratio of killings between journalists and other media professionals

- Journalists killed: 125 > 83%
- Other media professionals (OMPs) killed: 26 > 17%

### Ratio of killed journalists among various mediums

Among the 125 journalists killed, 81 (or 65%) worked for print media; 42 (or 34%) worked for TV channels; and 2 (or 1%) for digital media outlets.

### Ratio of killed OMPs among various mediums

Among the 26 OMPs killed, 18 (or 70%) worked for TV channels; 5 (or 19%) for digital media outlets, 2 (or 8%) for print media and one (3%) for social media outlets.

### Ratio of the most vulnerable designations of journalists and OMPs killed

**Journalists:** Of the 125 journalists killed, the following were the most vulnerable professional

roles/designations, including the riskiest role – reporter:

- 102 reporters – 81.5%
- 8 correspondents – 6%
- 4 bureau chiefs – 3%
- 4 sub editors – 3%
- 2 editors – 1.5%
- 1 anchorperson – 1%
- 1 chief editor – 1%
- 1 press club official – 1%
- 1 columnist – 1%
- 1 resident editor – 1%

**Other Media Professionals:** Of the 26 OMPs killed, the following were the most vulnerable professional roles/designations, including the riskiest role – cameraperson:

- 13 Cameramen – 50%
- 6 Bloggers/Vloggers (citizen journalists) – 24%
- 2 Drivers – 8%
- 1 Assistant – 3.5%
- 1 Broadcast technician 3.5– %
- 1 host – 3.5%
- 1 Photojournalist – 3.5%
- 1 Security guard – 3.5%

## The deadliest regions for killed journalists and other media professionals (OMPs) in Pakistan

- 46 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – 30% (including 41 journalists and 5 OMPs)
- 42 Sindh – 28% (including 33 journalists and 9 OMPs)
- 31 Balochistan – 20% (including 22 journalists and 9 OMPs)
- 27 Punjab – 18% (including 26 journalists and 1 OMP)
- 4 Islamabad – 3% (including 2 journalists and 2 OMPs)
- 1 Abroad – 1% (1 journalist)

This data indicates Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh have been the deadliest places for journalists and OMPs in Pakistan with every third journalist or OMP killed in the period under review dying in these regions, in the line of duty. Over half of all journalists and OMPs killed in Pakistan died in these two provinces. One third of all journalists and OMPs died in KP alone, one-third in Sindh and about one third in Balochistan and Punjab combined.

- **Journalists:** The deadliest place for journalists has been Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (41 killed), Sindh second deadliest (33 killed) and Punjab third deadliest (26 killed). Balochistan (22 killed) and Islamabad (2 killed) were fourth and fifth.
- **Other Media Professionals:** The deadliest place for OMPs has been Balochistan and Sindh – with 9 killed in each province. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the second deadliest with 5 OMPs killed, Islamabad third deadliest with 2 and Punjab fourth with one OMP killed in the line of duty.

## Deadliest cities for Journalists and Other Media Practitioners in Pakistan

- **Karachi** deadliest city – 16 killed (11%)
- **Quetta** second deadliest – 12 killed (8%)
- **Khairpur** third deadliest – 6 killed (4%)

At least **five** journalists and OMPs (3%) were killed each in Islamabad, Khuzdar, Lahore, Peshawar and Swat each. Four were killed in Charsadda and **three** each in Badin, Rawalpindi and Turbat. **Two** were killed each in Bajaur, Hafizabad, Hub, Hyderabad, Kalat, Khanewal, Larkana, Lasbela, Malakand, Mandi Bahauddin, Mardan, Mianwali, Mohmand, Naushero Feroz, North Waziristan, Sialkot, Sukkur and Wana.

**One** journalist or OMP was killed each in Abbottabad, Barkhan, Bhakkar, Dadu, Dargai, Darra Adamkhel, Daska, Gwadar, Gambat, Ghotki, Hangu, Haripur, Hattar, Jacobabad, Jafarabad, Jamrud, Jhelum, Kandhkot, Karak, Kasur, Lalamusa, Landikotal, Mansehra, Miranshah, Mirpur Khas, Mirpur Mathelo, Muzaffargarh, Orakzai, Panjgur, Qambar Shahdadkot, Sahiwal, Shikarpur, Tank, Vihari and Washuk.

## Modes of Murders and Deaths – how journalists and Other Media Practitioners were killed

Of the 151 journalists and OMPs killed in at least eight different ways, in the line of duty in 25 years (2000-24) in Pakistan, at least 127 (or 84% of the total) were killed in direct target killings while 24 (16%) were killed indirectly in other kinds of attacks on others while they were reporting events.

### A. Target killed in line of duty

- Shot dead (target killed) – 117
- Tortured to death – 4
- Beheaded – 3
- Bomb explosion (targeted specifically at a journalist) – 2
- Drowned forcibly – 1

### B. Non-target killed in line of duty

- Bomb blast (overall) – 22 (*including suicide bombing targeted at public gatherings – 15; bombing aimed at public gatherings – 4; and Secondary/follow-up suicide bombing aimed at killing rescuers – 3*).
- Trampled under truck – 1
- Killed in crossfire – 1



## Chapter 2

# The Year in Review – Violations against Media and its Practitioners in Pakistan

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At least 57 cases of attacks and violations against media and its practitioners, including journalists and other media professionals (OMPs), took place in Pakistan in the period between November 2023 and August 2024. While there are fewer separate incidents of violations than the preceding year, what has remained unchanged from the previous year is a continuing trend of targeting journalists and OMPs including women journalists and those journalists who work for digital media, according to data collected and verified by Freedom Network.

The findings reveal that despite a change in government in the period under review resulting from the February 2024 general elections from one that was characterized as media-hostile to one supposedly friendlier, not only did it not make the media environment majorly safer for media and its professionals but also it ended up creating an even more violent and riskier situation. All cases reported here relate to journalism work. Cases, including murder, not related to journalism work as reported or suspected are not included in this data.

The data shows that almost no place in Pakistan is safe – the provinces and the federal capital as well as other territories remain risky regions to practice journalism. According to key findings:

### Scale of violations against media practitioners:

At least 57 cases of threats and attacks were documented against journalists, other media professionals and media institutions in the 10 months from November 2023 to August 2024 across all territories of Pakistan, including the four provinces, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir. This is an average of nearly six cases of violations against media and its practitioners every month. At least 49 cases of violations were reported against journalists and eight against other media professionals (such as citizen journalists and non-editorial employees of news organizations).

### Categories of violations:

The documented cases in the period under review included six journalists and other media professionals **killed**, plus four unsuccessful **assassination attempts**; nine specific instances of **legal action** against journalists; four cases of **arrests and detentions**; 19 cases of **physical assault**; six cases of **offline or online threats**; one case of **kidnapping** and four cases of **digital threats**.

### The most dangerous regions for media practitioners:

Overall, Sindh emerged as the riskiest and most dangerous place to practice journalism in Pakistan in the period under review, with 37% of the violations (21 out of total 57 cases).

Punjab was the second worst with 23% of the violations (13 cases), followed closely by Islamabad (12 cases, or 21% of the violations). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was the fourth most dangerous region with 12% violations (7 cases). These were followed by AJK and Balochistan with 3.5% violations (2 cases) each. No case was reported from Gilgit-Baltistan.

### The riskiest mediums for media practitioners:

Of the total 57 attacks and other violations against journalists, other media professionals and media institutions recorded in Pakistan in the period under review, TV medium emerged as the single largest victim type of media with at least 30 of the cases (53%) against its practitioners. Print media was the second most targeted medium with 20 media practitioners working for it targeted (35%) while 6 cases (10%) were recorded of online journalists targeted. One case of a radio journalist getting targeted was also documented.

### Violations against women media practitioners:

Women journalists were targeted in at least five of the total 57 violations (9%) against journalists in the period under review. These included four who worked for television media and one for digital media. Of these, three were reporters and two anchorpersons.

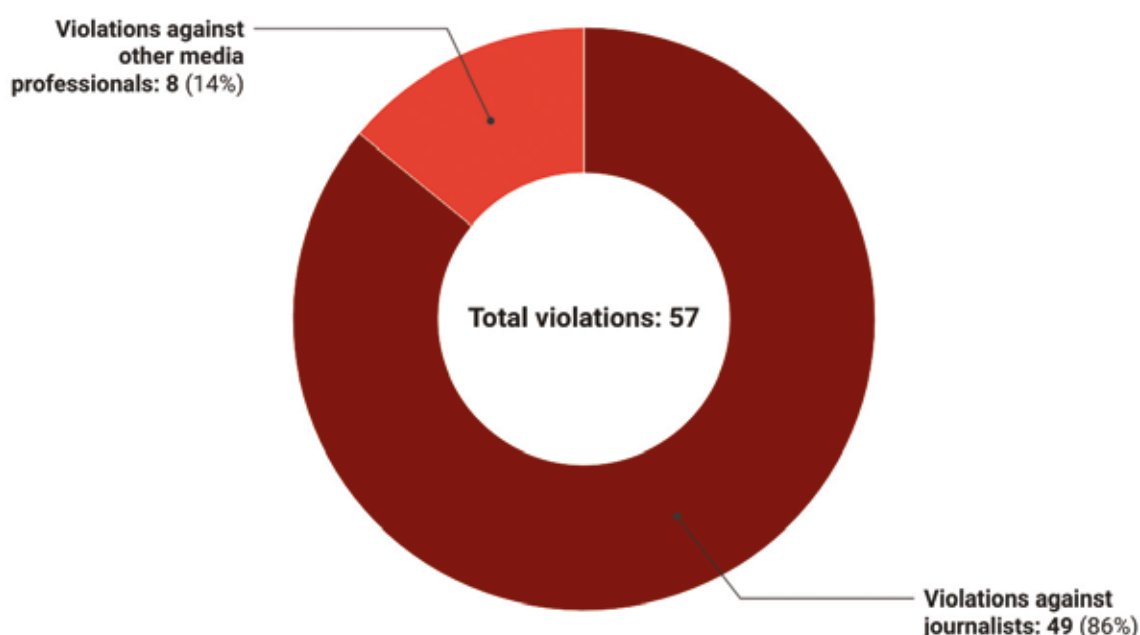
## Chronicles of violations: Key findings

### A. Categories of media victims

During the reporting period, at least 49 cases of violations were reported against journalists and eight against other media professionals (such as citizen journalists and non-editorial employees of news organizations).

#### Categories of victims

The majority of the reported media freedom violations, including threats and attacks, were committed against journalists.



Note: The violations were reported between November 2023 to August 2024.

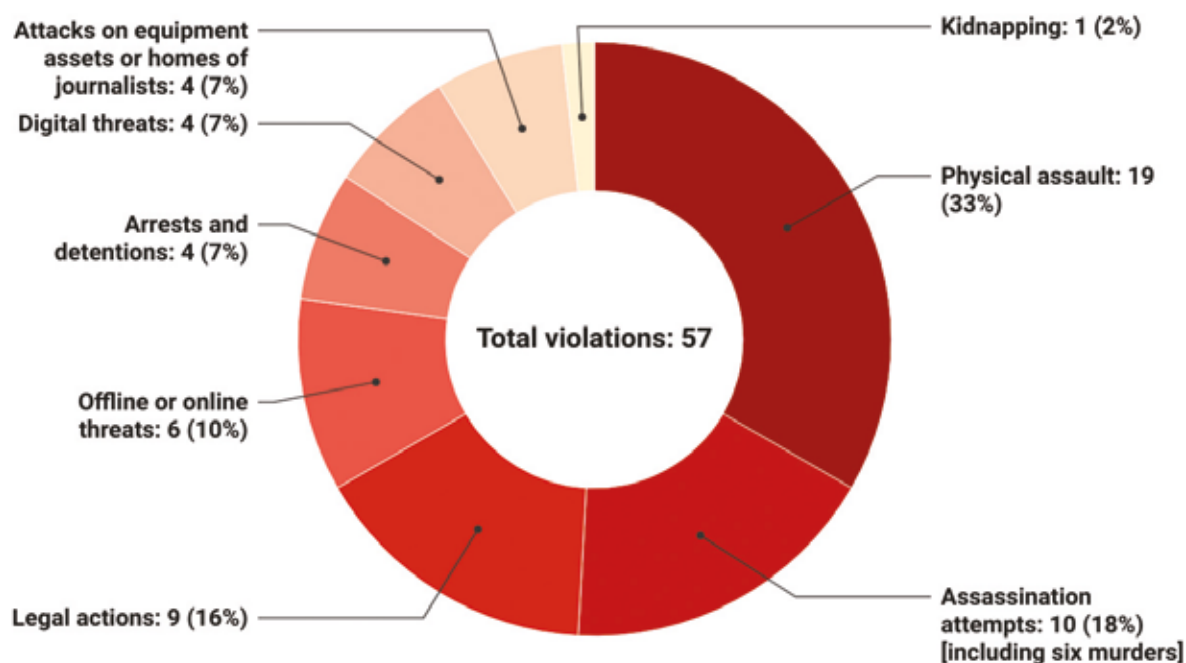
## B. Categories of violations against journalists and other media professionals (OMPs)

The **top three categories of violations** against journalists and OMPs in Pakistan during the period under review were 19 cases of physical assault (33%) in which 5 journalists were injured and 14 manhandled; 10 cases of assassination attempts (18%) in which 6 were killed (10%) and 4 survived; and 9 cases of specific legal actions (16%) involving civil and criminal law. The top three most frequent categories constituted a total of 38 cases (67%) – or two-thirds of the total number of violations.

Other categories of violations included 6 cases of offline or online threats (10%) including 4 instances wherein bodily harm was threatened; 4 cases of arrests and detentions (7%) including 2 arrests and detentions each; 4 cases of digital threats (7%) including abuse, trolling and hacking; 4 cases of attacks on assets or homes of journalists (7%) and 1 case of kidnapping (2%).

### Most frequent categories of violations

Journalists and other media professionals were most frequently targeted with physical assault, which included incidents involving manhandling and attacks leading to injuries.



*Note: The violations were reported between November 2023 and August 2024.*

## C. The most dangerous regions for journalists and OMPs in Pakistan

**Overall hostility:** Overall, Sindh emerged as the riskiest and most dangerous place to practice journalism in Pakistan in the period under review, with 37% of the violations (21 out of total 57 cases). Punjab was the second worst with 23% of the violations (13 cases), followed closely by Islamabad (12 cases, or 21% of the violations). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

was the fourth most dangerous region with 12% violations (7 cases). These were followed by AJK and Balochistan with 3.5% violations (2 cases) each. No case was reported from Gilgit-Baltistan.

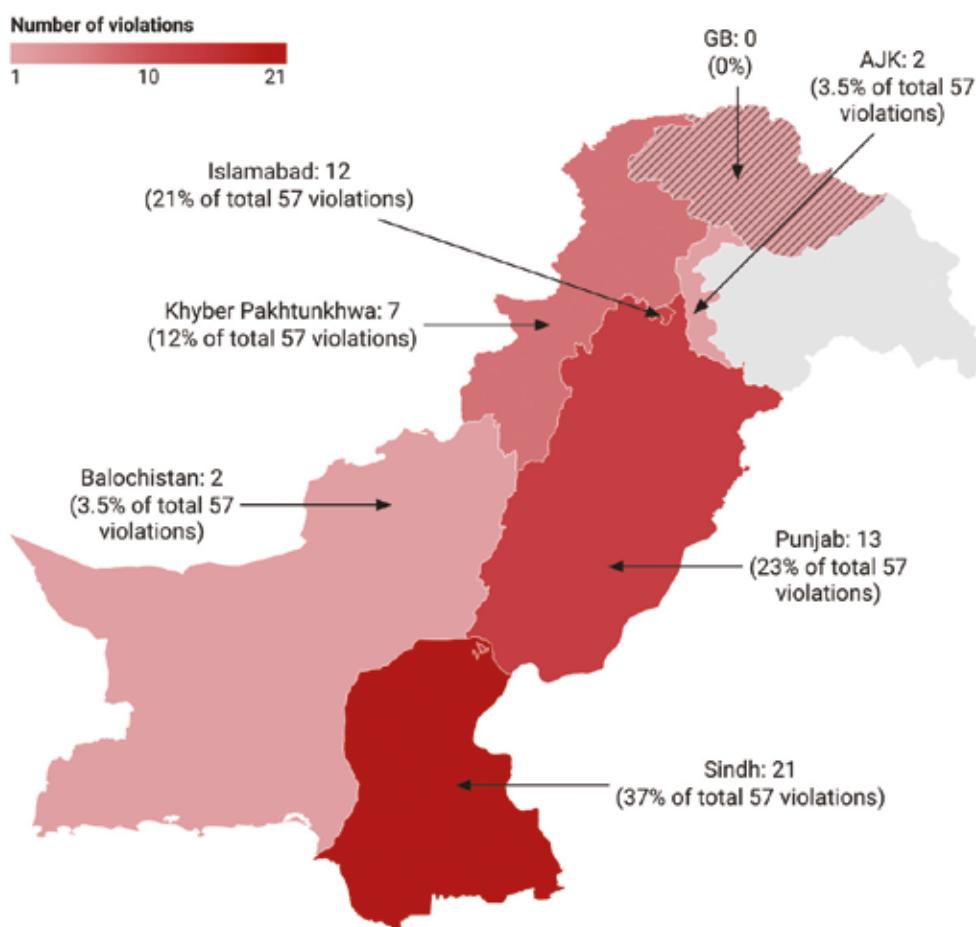
**Risk to life:** In terms of attempted assassination attacks on journalists, there were a total of 10 cases with six fatalities and four survivors. Of these attempts to murder, eight were against journalists and two against OMPs. Of the six journalists killed, three were from Sindh (Bachal Ghunio, Muhammad Saad and Nasrullah Gadani), two from KP (Kamran Dawar and Khalil Jibran) and one from Punjab (Ashfaq Hussain Sial).

**Assaults and bodily harm:** Sindh emerged as the most physically dangerous region for journalists and OMPs in the period under review with 10 of 19 cases (53%) of assaults, including injury, documented. The second worst were Punjab and Islamabad with 4 cases (21%) each and KP the third worst with 1 case (5%).

**Legal actions:** There were nine cases registered against journalists and OMPs altogether in the period under review, out of which AJK had 4 cases (44%), the highest, with Punjab second at 2 cases (22%) and Balochistan, Islamabad and Sindh third with 1 case (11%) each.

### Most dangerous regions for journalists and other media professionals

The highest number of violations – threats and attacks – against journalists and other media professionals between November 2023 and August 2024 were documented in Sindh.



## D. The riskiest mediums for journalists and OMPs in Pakistan

**In the crosshairs:** Of the total 57 attacks and other violations against journalists, other media professionals and media institutions recorded in Pakistan in the period under review, TV medium emerged as the single largest victim type of media with at least 30 of the cases (53%) against its practitioners. Print media was the second most targeted medium with 20 media practitioners working for it targeted (35%) while 6 cases (10%) were recorded of online journalists targeted. One case of a radio journalist getting targeted was also documented.

**Killed:** Of the 6 journalists killed in the period under review, 2 worked for TV media, 2 for digital media and 2 for print media. Of the 4 journalists and other media professionals who *survived assassination attempts*, 2 worked for television media and one each for print media and radio media.

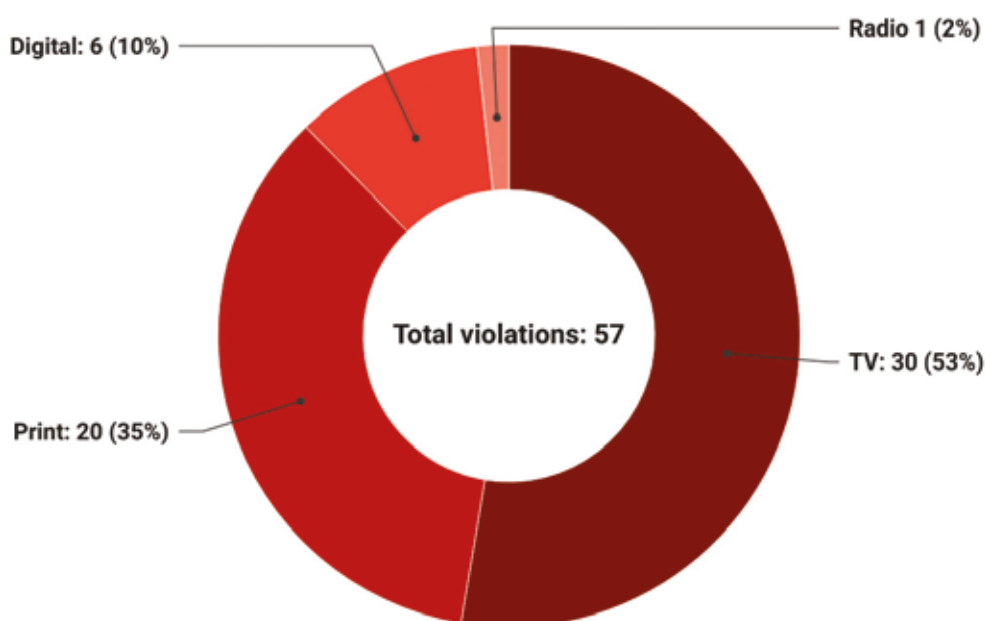
**Legal cases:** Of the 9 journalists against whom legal cases were registered, 6 were from print media, 2 were from digital media and one from electronic media.

**Assaulted and injured:** Of the 19 journalists assaulted, 15 (79%) worked for TV media, 3 for print media and 1 worked for digital media.

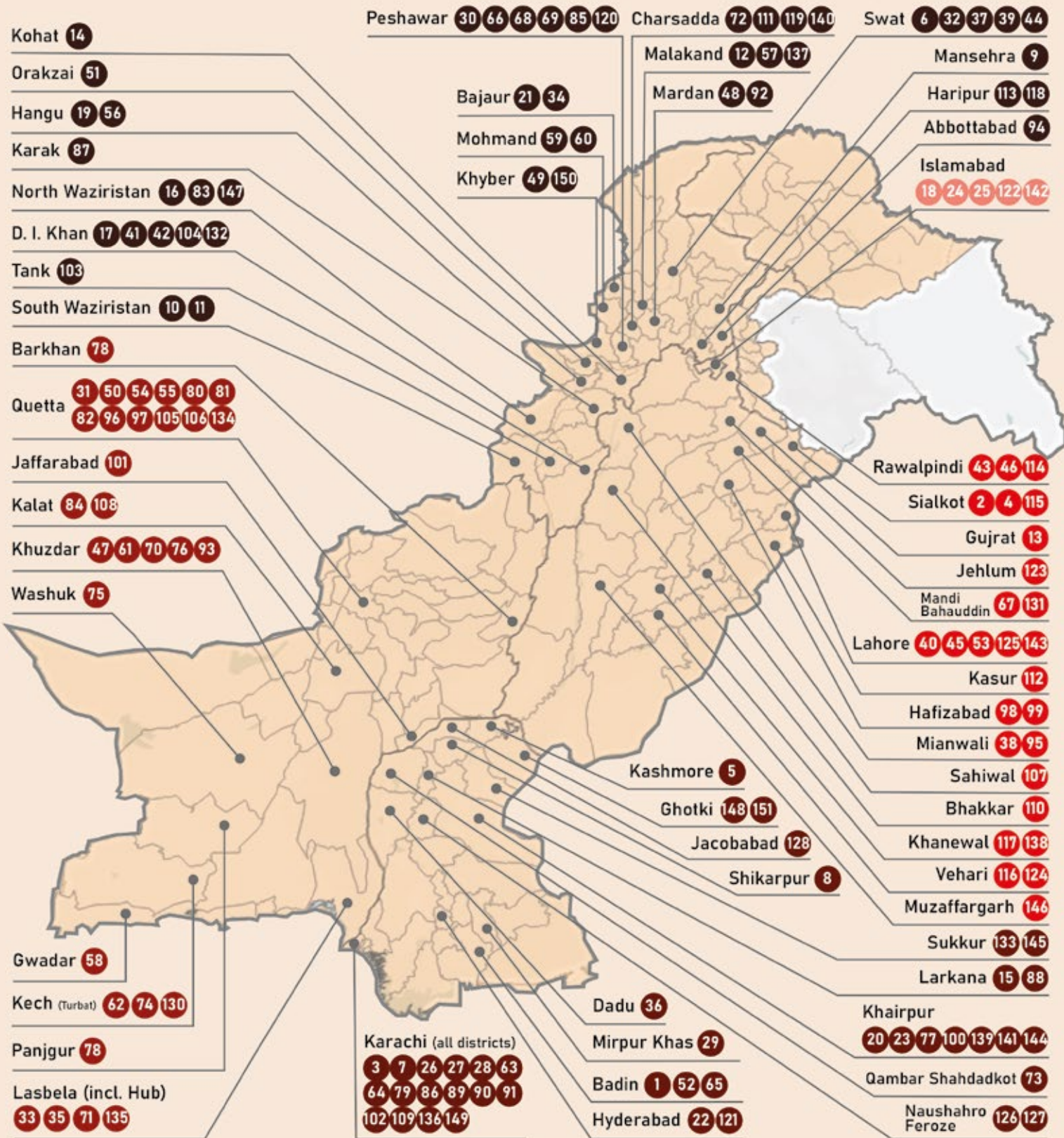
**Arrested or detained:** Of the 4 journalists arrested under specific cases or detained without being charged, 2 worked for print media and 1 each for TV media and digital media.

### Most targeted mediums

Over half of the threats and attacks were documented against journalists and other media professionals associated with TV media.



*Note: The violations were reported between November 2023 and August 2024.*



○ One journalist or media worker killed    ① Serial number on the chronological list

Scan to visit online interactive map

# Murders & Deaths Most Foul

Total 151 journalists and media workers were killed in Pakistan between 2000 and 2024. In most murders, the killers were never arrested or punished. This map marks the districts where the journalists were murdered, found dead or worked at, to honour their memory and continue the struggle to find justice for them.



|      |    |                             |    |                           |     |                       |     |                       |
|------|----|-----------------------------|----|---------------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| 2000 | 1  | SUFI MOHAMMAD KHAN          | 39 | MOHAMMAD SHOAIB           | 77  | MUSHTAQ KHUND         | 115 | ZEESHAN ASHRAF        |
| '01  | 2  | RANA IKRAM SHAHID           | 40 | S M SHAHID                | 78  | REHMATULLAH ABID      | 116 | ABID HUSSAIN          |
| '02  | 3  | DANIEL PEARL                | 41 | TAHIR AWAN                | 79  | SAQIB KHAN            | 117 | MUHAMMAD SAEED BUTT   |
| '03  | 4  | JAFFER KHAN                 | 42 | MOHAMMAD IMRAN            | 80  | SAIF UR REHMAN        | 118 | SOHAIL KHAN           |
| '04  | 5  | SHAHID SOOMRO               | 43 | AMIR WAKIL                | 81  | MOHAMMAD IQBAL        | 119 | EHSAN ULLAH SHERPAO   |
| '05  | 6  | FAZAL WAHAB                 | 44 | MUSA KHANKHEL             | 82  | IMRAN SHEIKH          | 120 | NOOR UL HASSAN        |
| '06  | 7  | SAGHIR HUSSAIN KAZMI        | 45 | MALIK TARIQ JAVED         | 83  | MALIK MUMTAZ          | 121 | ILYAS WARSII          |
| '07  | 8  | AMIR BUX BROHI              | 46 | RAJA ASAD HAMEED          | 84  | MEHMOOD AHMED AFRIDI  | 122 | MUHAMMAD BILAL KHAN   |
| '08  | 9  | SAJID TANOLI                | 47 | WASI AHMED QURESHI        | 85  | TARIQ ASLAM           | 123 | MIRZA WASEEM BAIG     |
| '09  | 10 | ALLAH NOOR                  | 48 | SIDDIQUE BACHA KHAN       | 86  | ABDUL RAZAQ BALOCH    | 124 | ZAFAR ABBAS           |
| '10  | 11 | MIR NAWAB                   | 49 | HASHIMZADA KHAN           | 87  | AYUB KHATTAK          | 125 | UROOJ IQBAL           |
| '11  | 12 | UBAIDULLAH AZHAR            | 50 | MALIK ARIF                | 88  | SHAN DAHAR            | 126 | AZIZ MEMON            |
| '12  | 13 | MIAN KHALID MEHMOOD         | 51 | AZMAT ALI BANGASH         | 89  | WAQAS AZIZ KHAN       | 127 | ALI SHER RAJPAR       |
| '13  | 14 | NASIR AFRIDI                | 52 | GHULAM RASOOL BIRHAMANI   | 90  | ASHRAF ARIAN          | 128 | ZULFIQAR MANDRANI     |
| '14  | 15 | MUNIR AHMED SANGI           | 53 | EJAZ UL HAQ               | 91  | KHALID KHAN           | 129 | ANWAR JAN             |
| '15  | 16 | HAYATULLAH KHAN             | 54 | MUHAMMAD SARWAR           | 92  | BAKHTAJ ALI           | 130 | SHAHEENA SHAHEEN      |
| '16  | 17 | MAQBOOL SIYAL               | 55 | EJAZ RAISANI              | 93  | EJAZ MENGAL           | 131 | ABID HUSSAIN ABIDI    |
| '17  | 18 | MUHAMMAD ISMAIL MALIK       | 56 | MISRI KHAN                | 94  | ABRAR TANOLI          | 132 | QAIS JAVED            |
| '18  | 19 | ANWER SALEH                 | 57 | MUJEEB UR REHMAN SIDDIQUI | 95  | SHAHZAD IQBAL         | 133 | AJAY KUMAR LALWANI    |
| '19  | 20 | MAKHDOOM RAFIQ              | 58 | ABDUL HAMEED HAYATAN      | 96  | IRSHAD MASTOI         | 134 | ABDUL WAHID RAISANI   |
| '20  | 21 | NOOR HAKIM                  | 59 | PERVEZ KHAN               | 97  | ABDUR RASOOL          | 135 | SHAHID ZEHRU          |
| '21  | 22 | RAB NAWAZ CHANDIO           | 60 | ABDUL WAHAB               | 98  | NADEEM HAIDER         | 136 | NAZIM JOKHIYO         |
| '22  | 23 | NOOR AHMED SOLANGI          | 61 | FAIZUDDIN SASOLI          | 99  | YAQOOB SHAHZAD        | 137 | MUHAMMAD ZADA         |
| '23  | 24 | MASUD MEHMOOD               | 62 | ILYAS NAZEER              | 100 | JEWAN ARIAN           | 138 | ZIA UR REHMAN FAROOQI |
| '24  | 25 | JAVED KHAN                  | 63 | WALI KHAN BABAR           | 101 | ZAFARULLAH JATAK      | 139 | ISHTIAQ SODHERO       |
| '25  | 26 | MURID SHEIKH                | 64 | ZAMAN IBRAHIM             | 102 | ARSHAD ALI JAFFERI    | 140 | IFTIKHAR AHMED        |
| '26  | 27 | MUHAMMAD ARIF               | 65 | ASHRAF PANHWAR            | 103 | ZAMAN MEHSUD          | 141 | NARESH KUMAR          |
| '27  | 28 | AZHAR ABBAS HAIDERI         | 66 | NASRULLAH AFRIDI          | 104 | MUHAMMAD UMAR         | 142 | ARSHAD SHARIF*        |
| '28  | 29 | ZUBAIR AHMED MUJAHID        | 67 | SYED SALEEM SHAHZAD       | 105 | MEHMOOD KHAN          | 143 | SADAF NAEEM           |
| '29  | 30 | KAMIL MASHADI               | 68 | ASFANDYAR KHAN            | 106 | SHAHZAD AHMED         | 144 | ASGHAR KHAND          |
| '30  | 31 | ABDUS SAMAD CHISHTI MUJAHID | 69 | SHAFIULLAH WAZIR          | 107 | KHALID MEHMOOD BUTT   | 145 | JAN MUHAMMAD MEHAR    |
| '31  | 32 | SIRAJ UD DIN                | 70 | MUNEER SHAKIR             | 108 | MUHAMMAD JAN SUMALANI | 146 | ASHFAQ HUSSAIN SIAL   |
| '32  | 33 | KHADIM HUSSAIN SHEIKH       | 71 | JAVED NASEER RIND         | 109 | TAIMOOR ABBAS         | 147 | KAMRAN DAWAR          |
| '33  | 34 | MUHAMMAD IBRAHIM KHAN       | 72 | MUKARRAM KHAN ATIF        | 110 | BILAL SEHAR           | 148 | NASRULLAH GADANI      |
| '34  | 35 | TABISH ISHTIAQ              | 73 | AURANGZEB TUNIO           | 111 | MEHBOOB KHAN          | 149 | MUHAMMAD SAAD AHMED   |
| '35  | 36 | MOHAMMAD AZAM LAGHARI       | 74 | ABDUL RAZZAQ GUL          | 112 | MIAN ABDUL RAZZAQ     | 150 | KHALIL JIBRAN         |
| '36  | 37 | ABDUL AZIZ SHAHEEN          | 75 | ABDUL QADIR HIJAZI        | 113 | BAKHSISH ILAHI        | 151 | MUHAMMAD BACHAL**     |
| '37  | 38 | ABDUL RAZZAQ JOHRA          | 76 | ABDUL HAQ BALOCH          | 114 | ANJUM MUNEEB RAJA     |     |                       |

\*killed in Kenya

\*\*Last update Aug '24

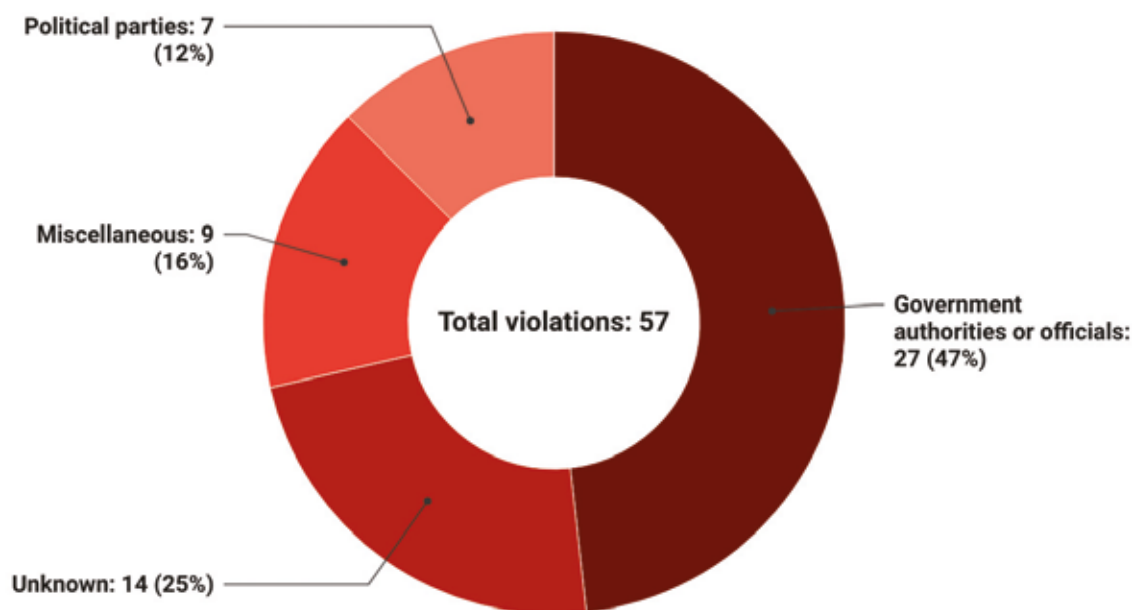
## E. The most vicious threat actors targeting journalists and OMPs in Pakistan

**DISCLAIMER:** The information included here is based on reporting by victims or their families and does not necessarily imply it is verified, unless specified. The information filed here is aimed at analyzing trends for the sole purpose of informing strategies to reduce threats against media and its practitioners.

Among the **top three identified threat actors** against journalists and OMPs in Pakistan during the period under review were 27 cases (47%) in which government authorities or their officials were the instigators. The second most frequent single threat actor was political parties with 7 cases (12%) followed by miscellaneous identified threat actors with 9 cases (16%), which included non-state actors as well as criminal gangs and various private groups and individuals. There were at least 14 cases (25%) in which the threat actors could not be identified and remained unknown.

### Most vicious threat actors

In nearly half of the threats and attacks, the journalists and other media professionals or their families accused government authorities and officials of being involved.



Note: The violations were reported between November 2023 and August 2024.

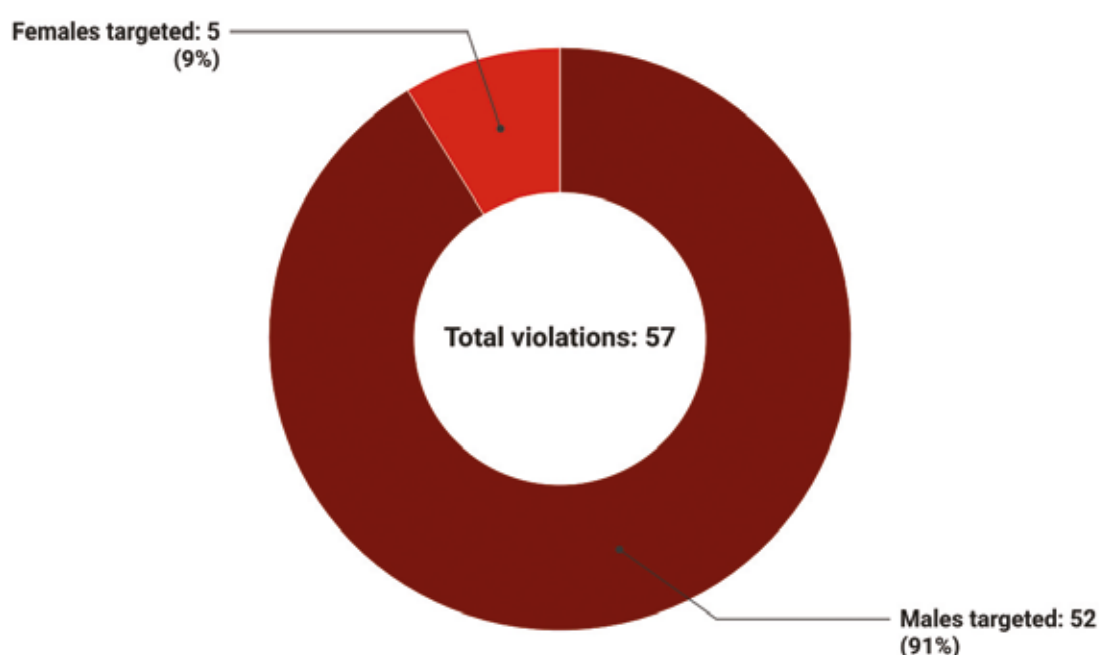


## F. Threats and attacks against women journalists and OMPs in Pakistan

Women journalists were targeted in at least five of the total 57 violations (9%) against journalists in the period under review. These included 4 who worked for television media and 1 for digital media. Of these 3 were reporters and 2 anchorpersons. Among these targeted women journalists, 2 are based in Islamabad and 1 each from KP, Punjab and Sindh. Among them 2 were assaulted while 3 were trolled and harassed online.

### Gendered breakdown of violations

While male journalists were the target of the vast majority of violations, threats and attacks against five women journalists and other media professionals were documented.



*Note: The violations were reported between November 2023 and August 2024.*

## G. List of journalists and OMPs killed in Pakistan during the year

The following is a list of the six journalists and OMPs killed in the period under review for, or while doing, their journalism work:

- **Ashfaq Hussain Sial:** Reporter for the Daily Khabrain newspaper in Muzaffargarh, Punjab, was gunned down on May 15, 2024, by men on a motorcycle. He covered crime and politics in a district controlled by tribal chiefs and powerful feudal lords with support from the authorities.
- **Kamran Dawar:** On May 21, 2024, unidentified gunmen shot dead Dawar, a freelancer and digital journalist for local digital media platform Waziristan Times, outside his house in Tappi village in Miranshah area in North Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

province. Dawar had been receiving threats for his reports highlighting militancy in the region.

- **Nasrullah Gadani:** On May 21, 2024, reporter for Sindhi-language Awami Awaz newspaper, was riding his motorcycle home when he was shot by unidentified attackers riding in a car near Qabool Khan Gadani village near Mirpur Mathelo in Sindh province. Gadani was shifted to the hospital where he slipped into a coma and was airlifted by the government to a hospital in Karachi where he succumbed to his injuries on May 24, 2024. Gadani, who left behind a widow and three children, was known for his often hard criticism of the large landholders of his area.
- **Saad Ahmed:** On June 5, 2024, shop security guard Ahmad Gul shot and killed Saad, a 24-year vlogger who was filming and interviewing shoppers in Buffer Zone area of Karachi in Sindh province. Saad had approached Gul to opine on the prospects of Pakistan in their upcoming match against India during the T20 Cricket World Cup, but the guard instead shot him dead at point blank range. He was arrested and a case registered against him.
- **Khalil Jibran:** On June 18, 2024, Jibran, a reporter for Khyber News TV, was travelling in his car along with two friends when his car was intercepted by a group of masked gunmen in Landikotal near Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The gunmen singled out Jibran and attempted to abduct him but upon fierce resistance he was shot at least 18 times, indicating this was not a random ambush but a targeted attack. Jibran had reported being threatened for his journalism ahead of his murder.
- **Bachal Ghunio:** On August 27, 2024, a group of gunmen shot and killed Ghunio, a reporter for Awaz TV in Ghotki in Sindh province while he was working in his fields in the village of Allah Bakhsh Ghanijo. The attackers fled after shooting him. One suspect was later arrested. The journalist was known for his stories against gangs of dacoits in the area. Ghunio had reported threats he had received and requested assistance but was not provided it. He left behind a widow and five children.

## Chapter 3

# Chronicle of a Journalist's Avoidable Death Foretold – test case of combating impunity of crimes

By Iqbal Khattak

On August 27, 2024, Bachal Ghunio, a journalist in Ghotki district of Sindh province in Pakistan, was gunned down by a group of armed men after years of reporting on the adverse socio-economic impact of gangs of dacoits in the region. While he was the latest in a string of over 150 journalists killed in Pakistan for their journalism work, his case is additionally tragic as he had repeatedly reported death threats he had been receiving and had actively sought protection which he never received. His death was foretold.

“He was killed for his reporting,” Ghulam Rasool Farooqi, a local journalist and colleague of Bachal’s in Ghotki, told Freedom Network. “Bachal was under threats for his reporting on gangs of dacoits who are kidnapping people for ransom.”

Bachal, 44, had been working as a journalist for the last 12 years and was associated with Sindhi-language *Awaz TV News* channel when he was killed. His shock murder came on the heels of months of harassment and death threats he had been receiving and reporting to various authorities including the local government. He even made written appeals to the courts, chief minister and police for protection.

Six months before being assassinated in a field outside his home, his mud house was also attacked. A few weeks later a group of armed men petitioned a jirga, a traditional assembly of local elders that serves as an impromptu social court delivering summary trials. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has outlawed ‘jirga justice’ as unacceptable private mob justice.



*File photo of late Muhammad Bachal Ghunio*

Bachal was accused of influencing local police into announcing head money on a wanted dacoit who went on to commit suicide in a live video feed. Bachal was accused of inspiring the suicide. To establish his innocence, the jirga forced Bachal to walk on a bed of burning coals. If his feet did not burn, he would be spared. His feet sustained burn injuries. The jirga found him “guilty” of influencing the local police’s head money on the dacoit who committed suicide.

“Bachal was reporting against the lawlessness by the dacoits and how local society was terrorized by their acts,” Abdul Wahid Malik, the chairman of Ubaro Press Club in Ghotki district told Freedom Network. “He was a journalist who was known for his good reports on these dacoits and public interest journalism.” Bachal was deputy general secretary of Ubaro Press Club in Ghotki.

For many years, gangs of dacoits have held sway in some border regions between Punjab and Sindh provinces and are a major headache for both the provincial governments. In August 2024, one gang killed 11 policemen.

Bachal sent letters seeking protection from the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the top Sindh Police officer – the inspector general. The letter, reproduced in this report, is undated but a date of April 12, 2023, stamped on it indicates the letter had been referred to the senior police officer in Ghotki district where the journalist hailed from.

What action Ghotki police official took to protect Bachal and what was the response of the apex court remains unclear although his murder shows he was not extended requested protection.

“I am a journalist and a dacoit who is getting ransoms has made my life unlivable. Please get me justice,” Bachal pleads to the chief justices of Sindh High Court and Supreme Court of Pakistan as well as Sindh chief minister and Sindh IG police. While he never received protection, can he and his destitute family receive justice after his avoidable and tragic death? His is a test case for the Sindh province and the country in their duty of combating impunity of crimes against journalists.



*Family of late journalist Bachal Ghunio by their mud house in a village in Ghotki, Sindh.*



## Chapter 4

# Courts Combating Impunity of Crimes against Journalists and Other Media Practitioners

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Impunity of crimes against journalists is best tackled through judicial actions as it pertains to justice for victims of crimes. There were several instances during 2024 when various courts – including district courts, high courts and the apex court – came to the rescue of journalists charged under various offences, often by state actors.

By taking up several cases during 2024 pertaining to journalists and ordering judicial actions against actors intimidating media practitioners, the judiciary helped lower the frequency and scale of impunity of hurtful acts against journalists and other media practitioners. These included, but are not limited to, the following key judicial actions:

- **Multiple journalists; cases:** On January 30, 2024, a three-member bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan comprising Chief Justice Qazi Faez, Musarrat Hilali and Ali Mazhar took up a suo moto notice and hearing against the issuance of notices to a dozen journalists including Sami Ibrahim, Moeed Pirzada, Arshad Sharif by the FIA for allegedly running a slander campaign against superior judiciary judges. The suo moto notice was taken based on a resolution passed by the Press Association of the Supreme Court and the Islamabad High Court Journalists Association. The court ordered that journalists not be charged for criticism of the judiciary. The chief justice observed that the intimidation of press would not be tolerated saying it involves key fundamental rights. He also accused the FIA of using the judiciary’s name to go after the journalists and restrained it from arresting them. Attorney General of Pakistan Mansoor Awan assured the Supreme Court that the FIA will close cases against journalists Imran Shafqat and Amir Mir.
- **Imran Riaz case:** On February 23, a judicial magistrate refused physical remand of journalist commentator Imran Riaz to the Punjab government’s Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE), which had arrested him days earlier on graft charges. Along with his father, Riaz was charged with embezzlement in a land deal involving a government contract dating eight years earlier. He was freed on court orders on March 1. However, within hours, he was re-arrested, from the Lahore Airport as he attempted to leave for Umra pilgrimage. He was charged with resorting to violence in Lahore outside the home of former prime minister Imran Khan. On June 14, Riaz was freed by the Sessions Court of Lahore citing “deficient evidence” in the case against him.
- **Wajid Mughal, Arslan Baloch, Mudassar Javed:** On March 13, 2024, District and Sessions

Court Judge Qudrat Ullah in Islamabad indicted Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf Senator Faisal Javed for disrupting and threatening journalists Wajid Mughal of 24 News channel, Arslan Baloch of Dunya News channel and Mudassar Javed of Dawn News channel at a party press conference on August 9, 2022, in Islamabad. The judge said it is a crime to threaten journalists.

- **Asad Toor case:** On March 16, 2024, YouTuber and journalist Asad Toor was released from prison after being granted bail by Special Court Central Judge Humayun Dilawar in Islamabad. He had been arrested on February 26, 2024, for allegedly running a malicious campaign on media platforms X and YouTube against the judiciary. He was interrogated by a joint investigation. The special court was established by the Federal Investigation Agency.
- **Israr Rajput:** On March 25, 2024, a Judge Mumtaz Hanjra of Judicial Complex Rawalpindi dismissed charges of spreading alleged social disharmony against reporter Israr Rajput. An FIR was registered against him for posting an insensitive tweet sectarian in nature. The judge accepted Rajput's plea that he had immediately deleted the tweet after posting it after himself realizing that it was inappropriate.
- **Arshad Sharif:** On August 2, 2024, a three-member committee, established under the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act 2023, and headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, constituted a five-member larger bench to hear suo moto case regarding the murder of journalist Arshad Sharif in Kenya. This was in response to a request to the committee on July 3, 2024, by a three-member bench of the Supreme Court to form a larger bench to expedite the case. On July 9, 2024, a Kenyan court ruled the murder of Pakistani journalist Arshad Sharif 'unconstitutional' and 'un-proportionate' and ordered law enforcement agencies to pay 10 million Kenyan shillings to the family of the slain reporter, who was shot dead by the Kenyan police in 2022.
- **Aun Ali Khosa:** Responding to a habeas corpus petition, on August 17, 2024, Lahore High Court Justice Shahbaz Rizvi ordered the police to recover YouTuber Aun Ali Khosa allegedly picked up by law enforcement agencies. On August 19, the digital current affairs creator returned home, his counsel informed the court thanking it for the productive intervention.
- **Nasrullah Gadani:** On August 27, 2024, the District and Sessions Court in Ghotki in Sindh rejected the bail pleas of Pakistan People's Party leader Khalid Lund and his sons Shahbaz Lund and Noor Lund in the murder case of journalist Nasrullah Gadani. The Lund family is accused of ordering the murder of Awami Awaz newspaper reporter Gadani on May 21, 2024.

## Chapter 5

# Pakistan Media Impunity Index 2024

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Pakistan was the first country in the world to legislate specifically on the issue of safety of journalists by first enacting the provincial Sindh Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners Act 2021 and then The Protection of Journalists and Other Media Professionals Act 2021 at the federal level.

These milestones came nearly a decade after the United Nations adopted the global *UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity* in 2012 with Pakistan listed among five pilot countries for its implementation. Pakistan endorsed the Plan in 2013.

After a long advocacy cycle by several stakeholders, steered primarily by the Pakistan Journalists Safety Coalition (PJSC), a broad-based national alliance led by Freedom Network and comprising media, journalists, civil society, political parties and rights groups, legal frameworks by the federal and Sindh governments were enacted to develop policies, structures and resources to protect journalists and other media practitioners against threats, intimidation, attacks and harm.

Because Pakistan is a federation, the state allows both federal and provincial level legislation customized for local needs. This provides the federal government as well as all the four provinces and two regional territories – Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab and Sindh to enact their respective legislation.

So far only the federal government and Sindh province have enacted laws for safety of journalists. Even in these two cases progress in terms of operationalization of the laws and establishment of safety commissions charged with implementation and creating responsive systems has been patchy. The other three provinces and two special territories have not even enacted the laws yet and are in varying stages of generating political consensus to get there.

This uneven progress as well as continuing crimes against media and its practitioners necessitates a standardized barometer of measuring progress at the federal and provincial/local levels to combat impunity of crimes against journalists and other media professionals. This is especially so since combating impunity must be a legal and judicial process premised on formal policy and legislative cover requiring ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Hence the **Pakistan Media Impunity Index** developed by Freedom Network. The inaugural version measuring progress in 2024, presented here, will be a pilot version that will be developed further in 2025 based on utility and feedback from stakeholders. The index will rate and rank specific qualitative and quantitative measures, partly inspired by the *UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*.



The index includes a matrix of three main areas of monitoring – **policy-related** actions, **legislation-related** action and **operational-related** actions. However, in this version of the index, the assessment does not include the performance of the safety commission established so far only by Sindh. A separate area of monitoring on performance of any established mechanisms, such as safety commissions, will be included in the index in 2025.

**Pakistan Media Impunity Index – 2024 Score (Maximum score: 10; 0 for each ‘No’, 1 for each ‘Yes’)**

| Indicators  | AJK | Balochistan | GB | Federal | KP | Punjab | Sindh |
|---|-----|-------------|----|---------|----|--------|-------|
| <b>A. POLICY RELATED ACTIONS</b>  |     |             |    |         |    |        |       |
| 1. UN Plan of Action endorsement (either formally or in policy/legislation) so far  | N   | N           | N  | Y       | N  | N      | Y     |
| 2. SDG 16.10.1 related commitment or action (inc. reporting) by the state / stakeholders so far                               | N   | N           | N  | Y       | N  | N      | Y     |
| <b>B. LEGISLATION RELATED ACTIONS</b>   |     |             |    |         |    |        |       |
| 3. Consultations (inc. by PJSC) with stakeholders (political parties, govt, civil society, unions, press clubs, etc.) in 2024 | N   | Y           | Y  | Y       | Y  | Y      | Y     |
| 4. Production of a draft safety law so far  | N   | Y           | N  | Y       | Y  | N      | Y     |
| 5. Discussion of draft/issue by relevant committees of assemblies/parliament so far   | N   | N           | N  | Y       | N  | N      | Y     |
| 6. Tabling of bill relevant legislature so far  | N   | N           | N  | Y       | N  | N      | Y     |
| 7. Passage of law so far  | N   | N           | N  | Y       | N  | N      | Y     |
| 8. Gender diversity in composition of the Commission under the law  | N   | N           | N  | Y       | N  | N      | Y     |
| <b>C. OPERATIONAL RELATED ACTIONS</b>   |     |             |    |         |    |        |       |
| 9. Notification of safety commission / appointments of chairperson and members (in case law is passed) so far                 | N   | N           | N  | N       | N  | N      | Y     |
| 10. Operationalization of Commission including office, staff, budget, rules of business, etc. (in case law is passed) so far  | N   | N           | N  | N       | N  | N      | N     |
| <b>TOTAL RATING: Max score: 10 (0 for each ‘No’ – 1 for each ‘Yes’)</b>   | 0   | 2           | 1  | 8       | 2  | 1      | 9     |

## Pakistan Media Impunity Index – 2024 Scorecard

### Good progress:

- By start of October 2024 when this report was compiled, the Impunity Index 2024 score shows that the federal and Sindh governments have done well so far in terms of both framing policy and enacting legislation and following up with notification of safety commissions to implement the legal framework. Sindh province scored nine while the federal government eight points out of 10.
- However, neither of the two governments has followed through on their notification operationalizing their safety commission despite three years after enacting the law in the case of the federal government and over one year after establishing the safety commission in Sindh's case where no office, staff or budget was provided to the commission to enforce its mandate.

### Poor progress:

- The governments of the other five regions – AJK, Balochistan, GB, KP and Punjab are at least three years behind the progress so far made by the federal and Sindh governments. These five regions have neither framed policies nor enacted legislation or legal frameworks that will bring them on a par with the federal and Sindh governments when it comes to policy and legislation level actions.
- Balochistan and KP regions score 2 out of 10. The two marks are for at least stakeholder consultations in these two provinces held on initiatives by media and civil society, not the government initiative, plus the existence of a draft law each on safety of journalists and media practitioners on which, thanks to PJSC, there is consensus but which the governments have failed to present in the provincial cabinets or table them in the two provincial assemblies.
- Punjab scores 1 out of 10 thanks to PJSC-steered efforts to mobilize stakeholders to convince the government to make forward movement on legislative front. On the policy front, the Punjab caretaker government in 2023 established an official executive committee comprising a PJSF representative, Pakistan federal Union of Journalists and information and interior officials, including the police, to respond to threats and attacks against journalists. The committee, however, has not been able to help even a single journalist despite an elected government assuming office after the February 2024 general elections. Unless the executive body is replaced by a statutory mechanism such as the safety commission established by Sindh government under the provincial journalists' safety law, its score will remain extremely low.

### No progress:

- GB also scores only 1 out of 10 because the regions has barely moved beyond early-stage stakeholder consultations on demanding official policy and legal frameworks for safety of journalists and other media practitioners. AJK scores zero as not even a single reported early-stage mobilization focusing on safety of journalists' and other media professionals has taken place there yet.



## **ABOUT FREEDOM NETWORK**

**([www.fnpk.org](http://www.fnpk.org))**

Freedom Network is a Islamabad-based independent media and development sector research, advocacy and training organization registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). 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.