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Violence, arrests and censorship in all four corners of India

Reporters Without Borders condemns a wave of violence and censorship against the media in various parts of the country in the past few weeks, including beatings of journalists and media restrictions in Kashmir, a newspaper editor arrested in Tamil Nadu, TV stations attacked in New Delhi and Maharashtra, a journalist fatally injured in a bombing in Uttar Pradesh and a Japanese journalist denied a visa. Armed conflict between Maoist guerrillas and government security forces is also having disturbing repercussions on journalists in the affected states, especially Chhattisgarh, under threat from both sides.

All these incidents jeopardise the safety and freedom of the media.

"The many political and social conflicts in India do not alone explain the level of violence and intolerance towards the media, especially as the state governments and the authorities in New Delhi are at least partly responsible for many of these press freedom violations," Reporters Without Borders said. "We urge Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to issue a public reminder that press freedom must be enforced with the same determination throughout the country." **Editor detained in Tamil Nadu**

Reporters Without Borders calls for the release of A. S. Mani, the editor of the Tamil-language magazine *Naveena Netrikkan*, who has been held since 19 July in Chennai, in the southeastern state of Tamil Nadu. One of his colleagues told Reporters Without Borders he was arrested on the orders of Police Commissioner S. R. Jangid after publishing a story about a case of alleged corruption within the police.

Mani already spent a month in prison in 2009 (<http://en.rsf.org/india-editor-rele...>). On his release, he told Reporters Without Borders: "Press freedom and press rights are being considerably curtailed by political pressures, particularly in Tamil Nadu. The press is not able to expose the evil at the roots of the society" (<http://en.rsf.org/india-two-journal...>).

TV stations ransacked

In New Delhi, the headquarters of the *Headlines Today* TV station were attacked by several thousand Hindu nationalist activists including members of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) on 16 July after the station linked RSS leaders to bombings on Muslim targets. A *Headlines Today* journalist told Reporters Without Borders that a cameraman was injured and the station sustained a lot of damage.

Also on 16 July, a crowd forced its way into a studio in the Marathi-language TV station *Ze 24 Taas* in Kolhapur, in the western state of Maharashtra, as it was about to broadcast a debate on the border dispute with the neighbouring state of Karnataka. Two of the station's employees were injured. The nationalist group Shiv Sena was blamed.

According to Indian press reports, 11 Shiv Sena members surrendered to the police and were released on bail.

Visa cancelled

The central government has meanwhile refused to extend the visa of Shogo Takahashi, the New Delhi bureau chief of Japanese state broadcaster NHK since 2008. He has been forced to leave the country. Indian press reports said the government thought his reporting was too negative and focused too often on poverty. Takahashi had helped to produce a documentary series called "Indo no Shogeki" (The Impact of India).

Several dozen foreign journalists are currently barred from reporting in India because the authorities refuse to give them visas.

Beatings and restrictions in Kashmir

In the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, journalists were subjected to major restrictions from 7 to 9 July because of a curfew imposed by the police and army in response to a wave of demonstrations and unrest. Reporters were unable to move about in the summer capital, Srinagar, because the local authorities cancelled their curfew passes. No newspapers were published on 10 July in protest against the restrictions.

Several incidents involving journalists were reported in connection with the demonstrations. Members of the Central Reserve Police Force beat 12 journalists covering a demonstration on 6 July. On the same day, Izhar Wani of Agence France-Presse wanted to rush home after being told that his wife and daughters had fainted from the effects of all the tear-gas discharged in the area. But he was prevented because his pass had been cancelled.

Mark Magnier of the *Los Angeles Times* was hit by a police officer near Srinagar's Lake Dal on 7 July. **Riyaz Masroor** of the BBC's Urdu-language service sustained a fracture to his left hand when policemen hit him on 9 July. "I left my home because the Department of Information called me to collect my pass, but policemen on the street attacked me with batons," Masroor told Reporters Without Borders.

Suhail Bukhari of the TV station NewsX was arrested on 10 July after getting his facts wrong in a report. He and the station apologised for the mistake but they are facing the possibility of being prosecuted on a charge of inciting violence.

As a result of the protests and unrest in Kashmir, the authorities imposed new restrictions on the free flow of information: censorship of local cable TV stations, censorship of certain *Facebook* pages and restrictions on mobile phones during the demonstrations. The newspaper *Greater Kashmir* reported that the organisers of a *Facebook* group were summoned for questioning by the police for posting reports and video footage of the rioting in Srinagar.

Killed by a bomb

Finally, Reporters Without Borders is saddened to learn that **Vijay Pratap Singh**, a veteran reporter for the Indian Express daily, died on 20 July in a military hospital in New Delhi from the injuries he received when a bomb went off outside the home of Uttar Pradesh finance minister Nand Gopal Nandi in Bahadurganj on 12 July.

The minister, who appeared to be the target, and four other people were also injured by the explosion. Singh leaves a wife, a five-year-old son and a daughter aged 11 months.