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Afghanistan Journalists' Worsening Reporting Perils

Journalism is an increasingly deadly profession in Afghanistan.

That is the chilling message from the Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC), based on [statistics](#) it released this week documenting attacks against the media over the past year.

The numbers are sobering: there were 191 incidents of “violence, threats, intimidation, and insults” against journalists from mid-March 2015 to mid-March 2016, compared to 103 incidents in the comparable period in 2014 to 2015. The incidents included the killings of 10 journalists, the injuring of 22, and beatings of 24. The AFJC also recorded a total of 14 “attempted armed attacks or bombings against journalists or media outlets” over the past year.

Government officials and elements of the Afghan military accounted for many of the attacks – 82 cases, or 43 percent, according to the AFJC. That surpassed the Taliban, linked to 52 of the incidents; “unidentified armed persons” were behind an additional 34 incidents. The victims include seven journalists from the entertainment channel Tolo TV and their production wing killed in a Taliban suicide [attack](#) on their minibus in Kabul on January 20. That attack appeared to fulfill the explicit [threat](#) the Taliban made in December 2014 to target any journalists seen as supporting “Western values.”

Afghan journalists have faced increasing [intimidation and violence](#) from both state and non-state figures in recent years. Journalists are vulnerable to threats, intimidation, and violence, particularly in relation to reporting on sensitive issues – including corruption, land grabbing, violence against women, and human rights abuses. Journalists working outside the country’s main cities are especially vulnerable to reprisals from powerful individuals and groups because they lack the protection provided by larger Afghan media organizations and international presence.

Until both government and insurgent forces allow journalists to report without fear for their safety, Afghanistan’s fragile media freedom is at risk of becoming a casualty of the country’s long civil conflict.

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