

— PAKISTAN

Violence Against Journalists 2018–2026



PAKISTAN: VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS, 2018–2026

A report by World Watch Alert

2026

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01

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Between 2018 and October 2026, journalists in Pakistan faced killings, physical attacks, alleged abductions, threats, arrests, criminal proceedings, broadcasting and digital restrictions, and pressure on editorial decisions. A free and independent press is fundamental to democratic accountability, access to information and the public's ability to scrutinise the exercise of power; journalists covering elections, political parties, public institutions, corruption, security matters and human-rights violations face risks to both their personal safety and the public's right to know.

The period also saw the growing importance of online journalism and social media. As digital platforms became essential channels for publishing and distributing news, journalists faced cybercrime investigations and legal proceedings over online content, alongside online harassment and digital restrictions.

Objectives

This study aims to:

- Document reported violence and violations against journalists from 2018 through October 2026.
- Present annual statistics and category-wise figures where available.
- Calculate percentage changes only where the underlying figures are sufficiently comparable.
- Identify major incidents, trends and developments affecting journalists' safety.
- Examine the relationship between physical violence, legal pressure, censorship and digital restrictions.

- Summarise the evidence for 2018–2022 without treating overlapping reporting periods as separate annual censuses.
- Highlight gaps in documentation, investigation, accountability and protection.

Scope and methodology

This report compiles information published by the following monitoring and human-rights organisations. Figures are reported as each organisation published them, with its reporting period stated beside every figure, because methodologies and periods differ between organisations and are not always calendar years.

ORGANISATION	ROLE IN THE REPORT
Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF)	Annual and period-based monitoring of attacks, assaults, censorship and legal pressure
Freedom Network	Threat data, documented violations and impunity reporting
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)	Journalist killings, safety alerts and regional press-freedom monitoring
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)	Case-specific reporting, detention alerts and impunity assessments
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)	Annual World Press Freedom Index rankings
Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)	Human-rights and freedom-of-expression reporting

DATA

02 Year-wise statistical overview, 2018–2026

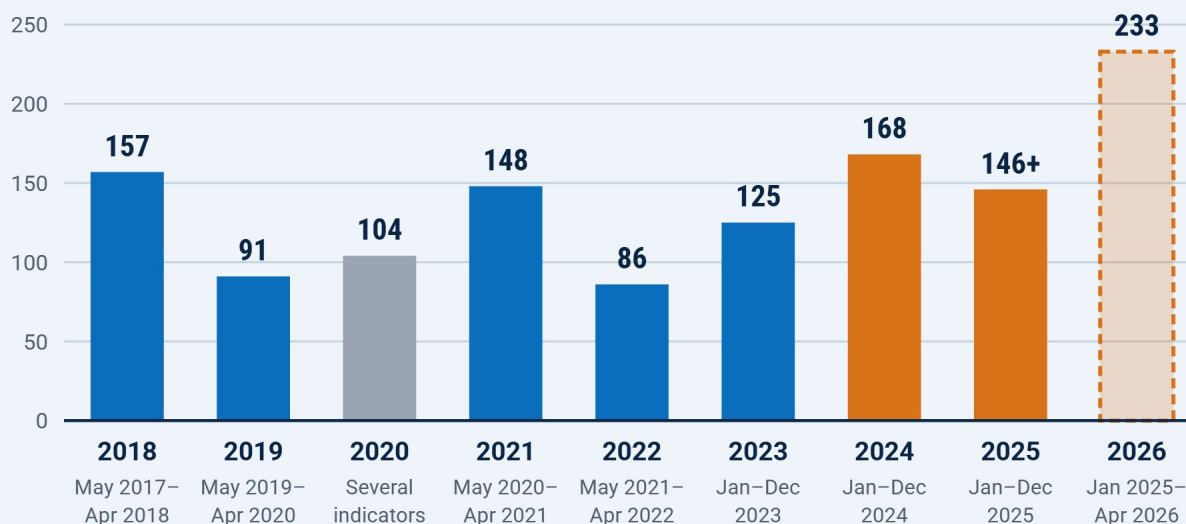
Monitors recorded between 86 and 233 cases a year, but the counts come from different organisations and reporting periods, so they are not a like-for-like trend and percentage changes are calculated only where periods match.

FIGURE

Reported violations against journalists by year, 2018–2026

Counts come from different monitors and reporting periods, so bars are not a like-for-like trend

■ Freedom Network
 ■ Pakistan Press Foundation
 ■ Several sources
■ Period overlaps 2025



No monitor covers May 2018–April 2019. The 2026 PPF figure spans January 2025–April 2026 and overlaps the 2025 count.

Source: World Watch Alert, year-wise statistical overview; Freedom Network and PPF reporting periods as published

03 Press-freedom index, 2018–2026

Pakistan's RSF ranking deteriorated from 139th in 2018 to 157th in 2022, improved to 150th in 2023, fell to 158th in 2025 and improved to 153rd in 2026. The index measures the broader environment for press freedom; it is not a count of attacks or individual violations.

FIGURE

Pakistan fell from 139th to 158th of 180 in RSF's index, then recovered to 153rd

Rank in the RSF World Press Freedom Index; lower on the chart means worse press freedom



Net change 2018–2026: 14 places lower. Worst position: 158th.

Source: Reporters Without Borders, World Press Freedom Index 2018–2026, as compiled in this report

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PROFILES

Prominent journalists

Six of the best-known journalists named in this report illustrate the full range of pressures documented between 2018 and 2026: a killing, a shooting, an abduction, assaults, removal from air and cybercrime prosecutions. Each profile draws only on incidents recorded in the year sections below.



PROFILE 01

Hamid Mir

- **July 2019:** his televised interview with former president Asif Ali Zardari was interrupted shortly after it began, prompting renewed criticism of censorship of political coverage.
- **31 May 2021:** Geo News suspended him after he spoke at a protest in solidarity with Asad Ali Toor.



PROFILE 02

Matiullah Jan

- **21 July 2020:** abducted in Islamabad and returned after approximately 12 hours. The incident triggered widespread concern and calls for an investigation into the perpetrators and motive.



PROFILE 03

Absar Alam

- **20 April 2021:** the former PEMRA chairman and television journalist was shot and wounded while walking near his home in Islamabad.



PROFILE 04

Asad Ali Toor

- **25 May 2021:** three unidentified men reportedly entered his Islamabad apartment, restrained him and beat him. He said the attackers identified themselves as members of a security agency; this was not an established judicial finding.
- **26 February 2024:** arrested by the FIA in Islamabad over online content about superior-court judges; released on bail on 16 March.
- **15 September 2026:** received an NCCIA notice to appear for an inquiry under Section 26-A of PECA.



PROFILE 05

Arshad Sharif

- **23 October 2022:** the senior investigative journalist was shot dead by Kenyan police outside Nairobi. Kenyan authorities initially described it as mistaken identity; a Pakistani investigative team later concluded that it appeared to be a planned assassination. Responsibility remained under investigation.



PROFILE 06

Iqrar-ul-Hassan

- **12–22 October 2026:** the television anchorperson was arrested in a cybercrime case over alleged anti-state, false and defamatory social-media content. He was remanded to NCCIA custody, sent on judicial remand on 19 October, and refused bail on 22 October. The allegations remained before the courts.

05

COUNTRY SITUATION

Year 2018

In 2018, journalists in Pakistan faced physical attacks, abductions, arrests, legal pressure, censorship and economic insecurity. The general election period was particularly concerning, with reports of intimidation and restrictions on political coverage. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that intimidation and self-censorship remained significant problems despite a decline in fatal violence. Other organisations documented physical assaults, restrictions on media distribution, and pressure on journalists and media outlets.

Annual statistics

CATEGORY	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND QUALIFICATION
Press-freedom violations	157	Freedom Network, May 2017–April 2018
Physical assault cases	22	Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF), 2018
Journalists killed	6	PPF's 2018 review; reported motives varied
Journalists injured	5	PPF, 2018
Journalists beaten or manhandled	25	PPF, 2018
Legal-action cases	7	PPF, 2018
Media restriction-related instances	31	PPF, including notices, suspensions, blocked websites and distribution disruptions

(CONTINUED)

CATEGORY	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND QUALIFICATION
Abduction or attempted-abduction cases	3	PPF, 2018

Major cases and incidents

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
10 January 2018	Taha Siddiqui	Reported attempted abduction and assault in Islamabad
5–6 June 2018	Gul Bukhari	Abducted in Lahore and released hours later
13 July 2018	Kadafi Zaman	Norwegian TV journalist arrested while covering a political rally; alleged police beating
13 July 2018	Zaibdar Marri	Reported disappearance in Balochistan while covering political campaigning
16 October 2018	Muhammad Sohail Khan	Killed by gunfire in Haripur
8 November 2018	Karachi Press Club	Armed plainclothes personnel reportedly entered the press club

International reports and findings

ORGANISATION	REPORT / ASSESSMENT	MAIN FINDINGS
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)	<i>Acts of Intimidation</i> , September 2018	Intimidation, threats, arrests and self-censorship remained serious concerns

(CONTINUED)

ORGANISATION	REPORT / ASSESSMENT	MAIN FINDINGS
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)	World Press Freedom Index 2018	Pakistan ranked 139th out of 180 countries
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)	South Asia Press Freedom Report 2017–2018	Documented attacks, killings, harassment and legal pressure across the region
Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)	State of Human Rights in 2018	Raised concerns about election-period violations, intimidation and restrictions on expression

Political timeline

PERIOD	POLITICAL CONTEXT	KEY DEVELOPMENTS
January–May 2018	PML-N government and transition period	Press-freedom violations documented by monitoring organisations
June–July 2018	Election campaign and interim administration	Gul Bukhari's abduction, Kadafi Zaman's arrest and the reported disappearance of Zaibdar Marri
August–December 2018	PTI government	Continued concerns about censorship, media pressure, violence and accountability

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COUNTRY SITUATION

Year 2019

In 2019, journalists reported pressure over coverage of the military, government policies and opposition political leaders. Television interviews were interrupted, news channels faced distribution restrictions, and media organisations reported increasing self-censorship. International press-freedom assessments described a difficult environment for independent journalism: RSF ranked Pakistan 142nd out of 180 countries, and the Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (IRADA) documented restrictions on broadcast and digital media.

Annual statistics

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND PERIOD
Journalists and media practitioners killed	4	IFJ, 2019 tally of targeted, bombing and crossfire deaths
Journalists killed	6	<i>The News</i> , calendar-year review of 2019
Attacks and violations against journalists and media practitioners	91	Freedom Network, May 2019–April 2020
Killings recorded in the 91-case review	7	Freedom Network, May 2019–April 2020
Verbal or written threats	23	Freedom Network, May 2019–April 2020
Physical assaults	10	Freedom Network, May 2019–April 2020

(CONTINUED)

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND PERIOD
Arrests, detentions or confinements	9	Freedom Network, May 2019–April 2020
Censorship incidents	10	Freedom Network, May 2019–April 2020
Legal cases against journalists	8	Freedom Network, May 2019–April 2020
RSF World Press Freedom Index position	142/180	RSF, 2019

Major cases and incidents

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
9 February 2019	Rizwan Razi	The television journalist was arrested over social-media posts described by authorities as defamatory. Observers alleged that he was beaten following his arrest.
30 April 2019	Malik Amanullah Khan	The local reporter and chairman of Parowa Press Club was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Dera Ismail Khan district.
4 May 2019	Ali Sher Rajpar	The journalist associated with Sindhi newspaper <i>Awami Awaz</i> was shot dead outside the Padidan Press Club. Reports said he had sought police protection after receiving threats linked to his professional activities.
16 June 2019	Muhammad Bilal Khan	The journalist and blogger, known for critical commentary on state institutions, was killed in Islamabad.

(CONTINUED)

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
July 2019	Hamid Mir's interview with Asif Ali Zardari	A televised interview with the former president was interrupted shortly after it began, prompting renewed criticism of censorship and restrictions on political coverage.
July 2019	Coverage of Maryam Nawaz	Television broadcasts carrying the opposition leader's interview or speech were interrupted or taken off air, according to contemporary media reports.
9 July 2019	Mureed Abbas	The BOL News anchor was shot dead in Karachi in a case reported as arising from a business dispute. The killing is included in some annual journalist-death tallies, although the motive was not established as journalistic work.
30 August 2019	Mirza Waseem Baig	The 92 News reporter was shot dead in Sarai Alamgir, Punjab.
November 2019	Nasrullah Chaudhry	The journalist was arrested after a raid on his home and faced a case involving allegedly prohibited literature. He was later sentenced under anti-terrorism legislation; the Sindh High Court acquitted him in April 2020.
25 November 2019	Urooj Iqbal	The Lahore-based journalist was shot dead. Reports identified her husband as the accused; the case raised concerns about violence against women journalists.

Censorship and pressure on media

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2019
Political interviews	Interviews with opposition figures, including Asif Ali Zardari, were interrupted or prevented from airing.

(CONTINUED)

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2019
Regulatory pressure	PEMRA issued notices and advisories to broadcasters and took action over programming.
Self-censorship	Journalists and media organisations reported pressure to avoid critical coverage of the government, military and security institutions.
Media economics	Reports described concerns about advertising pressure, newspaper distribution disruptions and financial vulnerabilities affecting editorial independence.

International reports and findings

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDING
Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 2019 World Press Freedom Index	Pakistan ranked 142nd out of 180 countries, reflecting serious challenges to press freedom.
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), 2019 killings report	Recorded four journalist deaths in Pakistan under its targeted-attack, bombing and crossfire categories.
Freedom Network, Pakistan Press Freedom Report 2019–20	Documented 91 cases of attacks and violations between May 2019 and April 2020, including killings, threats, assaults, arrests, censorship and legal cases.
IRADA, <i>Coercive Censorship, Muted Dissent: Pakistan Descends into Silence</i>	Highlighted restrictions affecting journalists, television coverage, digital expression and access to information during 2019.
US Department of State, 2019 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan	Recorded allegations of media censorship, pressure on critical journalists, distribution restrictions and self-censorship.

In 2019, the press-freedom challenge extended beyond physical violence to include censorship, regulatory pressure, digital restrictions and economic pressure on media organisations. The year provides evidence of a deteriorating environment for independent journalism during the PTI government, while responsibility for individual attacks must be assessed using the available evidence.

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COUNTRY SITUATION

Year 2020

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic added economic pressure to an already vulnerable media industry, with journalists and media workers facing job losses, salary cuts and forced resignations. High-profile incidents included the arrest of Jang and Geo Group editor-in-chief Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman, the abduction and recovery of journalist Matiullah Jan, and the killing of multiple journalists in different parts of the country. International press-freedom organisations raised concerns about pressure on journalists covering politically sensitive subjects and limited accountability for attacks. RSF ranked Pakistan 145th out of 180 countries.

Annual statistics

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND PERIOD
Journalists and media workers killed	9	IFJ, calendar-year 2020 tally
Journalists killed in connection with reporting	4	RSF's 2021 country assessment, referring to 2020
Journalists killed	7	Pakistan Freedom of Expression Report 2020
Journalists assaulted or attacked	36	Pakistan Freedom of Expression Report 2020
Journalists kidnapped or missing	5	Pakistan Freedom of Expression Report 2020

(CONTINUED)

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND PERIOD
Journalists tortured	2	Pakistan Freedom of Expression Report 2020
Enforced disappearances	3	PPF review of 2020
Arbitrary detentions	7	PPF review of 2020
Incidents of torture	10	PPF review of 2020
Government directives concerning media content, including bans	18	PPF review of 2020
Internet restrictions	4	PPF review of 2020
RSF World Press Freedom Index position	145/180	RSF, 2020

Major cases and incidents

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
12 March 2020	Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman	The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) arrested the Jang and Geo Group editor-in-chief in a case involving a decades-old property transaction. His detention prompted criticism from media organisations and concerns about the use of accountability proceedings against media executives.
26 May 2020	Zulfiqar Ali Mandrani	The senior journalist associated with Sindhi newspaper <i>Daily Koshish</i> was shot dead in Jacobabad, Sindh.
21 July 2020	Matiullah Jan	The journalist was abducted in Islamabad and returned safely after approximately 12 hours. The incident triggered widespread concern and calls for an investigation into the perpetrators and motive.

(CONTINUED)

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
23 July 2020	Anwar Jan Khetran	The journalist associated with <i>Naveed-e-Pakistan</i> was shot dead in Barkhan, Balochistan.
25 September 2020	Abid Hussain Abidi	The journalist was shot dead in the Malikwal area of Mandi Bahauddin district, Punjab.
7 December 2020	Qais Javed	The journalist associated with <i>Ehadnama</i> was shot dead in front of his home in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
18 December 2020	Imdad Phulphoto and Altaf Kalwar	The two television journalists were reportedly attacked in Sindh after covering stories concerning alleged local mafia operations.
23 December 2020	Malik Nizam Tani	The journalist was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Muzaffargarh, Punjab.

Censorship, arrests and media restrictions

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2020
Arrest of a media executive	Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman's arrest and prolonged detention became a major press-freedom controversy.
Abduction of a journalist	Matiullah Jan's disappearance and return highlighted concerns about the safety of journalists in Islamabad.
Television distribution restrictions	Geo News faced reported restrictions on cable distribution following the arrest of its group's editor-in-chief.
Online regulation	The proposed Citizens Protection (Against Online Harm) Rules generated concerns about government oversight and freedom of expression.

(CONTINUED)

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2020
Enforced disappearances and detentions	PPF's review documented disappearances, arbitrary detentions and other coercive measures affecting journalists and media practitioners.
Pressure on journalists	Rights organisations reported allegations of intimidation and pressure against journalists covering politically sensitive issues.
Economic insecurity	Media workers faced layoffs, salary reductions and forced resignations during an economically difficult year.

International reports and findings

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDINGS
RSF, World Press Freedom Index 2020	Ranked Pakistan 145th out of 180 countries.
IFJ, 2020 Killed Journalists Report	Recorded nine journalists and media workers killed in Pakistan in its calendar-year tally.
IFJ, South Asia Press Freedom Report 2020–21	Documented journalist killings, attacks, threats and other violations across the region, including Pakistan.
HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2020	Raised concerns over censorship, detentions, alleged abductions and deteriorating working conditions for media workers.
Pakistan Freedom of Expression Report 2020	Recorded killings, attacks, disappearances, torture and other violations affecting journalists and people exercising freedom of expression.
Free Press Unlimited, SDG 16.10.1 synthesis report	Summarised patterns in the safety of journalists, including physical attacks, arbitrary detention, disappearances and restrictions on content.

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COUNTRY SITUATION

Year 2021

In 2021, several prominent journalists faced violence or professional restrictions after reporting on politically sensitive issues. Major incidents included the shooting of Absar Alam outside his home in Islamabad, the assault on Asad Ali Toor, the killings of Ajay Lalwani in Sindh and Kashif Hussain in Punjab, and the bombing that killed television reporter Shahid Zehri in Balochistan. Geo News suspended television host Hamid Mir after he spoke at a protest in support of Asad Ali Toor. The government's proposed Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) drew concern from journalists and media organisations, who argued that a unified regulator could increase government control over the media. RSF ranked Pakistan 145th out of 180 countries, and HRCP raised concerns about restrictions on expression and attacks on journalists.

Annual statistics

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND PERIOD
Journalists and media workers killed	3	IFJ, calendar-year 2021 tally for Pakistan
Attacks and violations against media and practitioners	148	Freedom Network, May 2020–April 2021
Journalists killed for their professional work	6	Freedom Network, May 2020–April 2021
Failed assassination attempts	7	Freedom Network, May 2020–April 2021

(CONTINUED)

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND PERIOD
Kidnappings	5	Freedom Network, May 2020–April 2021
Arrests or detentions	25	Freedom Network, May 2020–April 2021
Physical assaults	15	Freedom Network, May 2020–April 2021
Legal cases filed against journalists	27	Freedom Network, May 2020–April 2021
Verbal threats	26	Freedom Network, May 2020–April 2021
RSF World Press Freedom Index position	145/180	RSF, 2021

Major cases and incidents

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
18 March 2021	Ajay Lalwani	The journalist associated with Sindhi newspaper <i>Daily Puchano</i> was shot in Sukkur, Sindh, and later died from his injuries.
20 April 2021	Absar Alam	The former PEMRA chairman and television journalist was shot and wounded while walking near his home in Islamabad.
24 April 2021	Abdul Wahid Raisani	The <i>Daily Azadi</i> reporter was shot dead in Quetta, Balochistan, while returning home.
25 May 2021	Asad Ali Toor	Three unidentified men reportedly entered his Islamabad apartment, restrained him and beat him. Toor said his attackers identified themselves as members of a security agency; this allegation was not an established judicial finding.

(CONTINUED)

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
31 May 2021	Hamid Mir taken off air	Geo News suspended the television host after he spoke at a protest in solidarity with Asad Ali Toor.
11 June 2021	Shafiullah Khan	The journalist associated with <i>The News</i> was killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
10 August 2021	Kashif Hussain	The correspondent for <i>Daily Khabrain</i> and <i>Daily Qomi Akhbar</i> was found murdered in his home in Vanike Tarar, Hafizabad district, Punjab. The motive and perpetrator required investigation.
10 October 2021	Shahid Zehri	The Metro News 1 reporter was killed when a bomb attached to his car exploded in Hub, Balochistan. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility and alleged that he was spying on the group; this was the group's claim, not an independently established finding.
8 November 2021	Muhammad Zada Agra	The social-media activist was shot dead in Sakhakot, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, after campaigning against drug trafficking and local criminal groups. He is relevant to threats against digital expression but should be distinguished from formal journalist-death tallies.
9 December 2021	Faysal Mujeeb	The photographer was reportedly beaten and detained by Pakistan Rangers while covering a political party event. CPJ called for an impartial investigation.

Censorship, regulatory pressure and media restrictions

(CONTINUED)

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2021
Suspension of television programming	Hamid Mir was taken off air after his remarks at a protest supporting Asad Ali Toor, raising questions about editorial independence.
Proposed Pakistan Media Development Authority	The PTI government's proposed authority drew opposition from journalist organisations concerned about increased state control and regulatory pressure.
Television channel restrictions	Human Rights Watch reported that regulatory agencies blocked cable operators and television channels that had aired critical programmes in several cases during 2021.

International reports and findings

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDINGS
RSF, World Press Freedom Index 2021	Ranked Pakistan 145th out of 180 countries.
IFJ, Killed List Report 2021	Recorded three journalist deaths in Pakistan in its calendar-year tally.
Freedom Network, State of Press Freedom Report 2021	Documented 148 attacks and violations between May 2020 and April 2021, including killings, attempted assassinations, kidnappings, arrests, assaults, threats and legal cases.
HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2021	Expressed serious reservations about freedom of expression and documented intimidation, assault, disappearance, murder and censorship involving journalists.
Human Rights Watch, World Report 2022 — Pakistan	Reported attacks on journalists, pressure on media outlets, self-censorship and restrictions affecting television coverage during 2021.
CPJ, Pakistan 2021 archive	Published alerts concerning attacks, detention and the killing of journalists and media practitioners in Pakistan.

09

COUNTRY SITUATION

Year 2022

In 2022, the removal of Prime Minister Imran Khan through a parliamentary vote of no-confidence on 10 April intensified tensions around political reporting. Major incidents included the killing of Hasnain Shah in Lahore, the deaths of Iftikhar Ahmed and Ishtiaq Sodharo in July, the killing of senior journalist Arshad Sharif in Kenya on 23 October, and the death of Channel 5 reporter Sadaf Naeem while covering a PTI long march. Media organisations also raised concerns about PEMRA restrictions, criminal proceedings against journalists and the suspension of news channels. RSF ranked Pakistan 157th out of 180 countries, down from 145th in 2021.

Annual statistics

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Journalists and media workers killed	5	IFJ, calendar-year 2022 tally
Journalist deaths connected to journalistic work	2	PPF, calendar year 2022
Physical assaults against media professionals	At least 30	PPF, 2022
Threats against media professionals	At least 12 instances	PPF, 2022
Arrests connected to journalistic work	At least 10	PPF, 2022

(CONTINUED)

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Media professionals facing registered cases	At least 9	PPF, 2022
Raids at media professionals' homes	2	PPF, 2022
Attacks on press clubs	1	PPF, 2022
Attacks and violations against media practitioners	86	Freedom Network, May 2021–April 2022
RSF World Press Freedom Index position	157/180	RSF, 2022

Major cases and incidents

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
24 January 2022	Hasnain Shah	The Capital TV crime reporter was shot dead outside the Lahore Press Club.
March–April 2022	Ziaur Rehman	The 7 News reporter was critically injured when armed men opened fire on a vehicle carrying journalists in Khanewal district. He died from his injuries on 28 April.
1 July 2022	Ishtiaq Sodharo	The local Sindhi journalist was killed in Khairpur district, Sindh. The IFJ and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) condemned the killing.
2 July 2022	Iftikhar Ahmed	The <i>Daily Express</i> reporter was shot dead while travelling to work in Charsadda district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
5 July 2022	Imran Riaz Khan	The journalist and anchor faced multiple cases over allegations that his statements and online content criticised the Pakistan Army and other state institutions.

(CONTINUED)

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
27 August 2022	Muhammad Younis	The senior <i>Daily Express</i> journalist was shot dead in Shorkot, Punjab, according to contemporary media reports.
23 October 2022	Arshad Sharif	The senior investigative journalist was shot dead by Kenyan police outside Nairobi. Kenyan authorities initially described the shooting as a case of mistaken identity; a Pakistani investigative team later concluded that it appeared to be a planned assassination. Responsibility remained the subject of investigations.
30 October 2022	Sadaf Naeem	The Channel 5 reporter died after falling from a moving PTI long-march vehicle near Sadhoke while covering the event.

Censorship, arrests and media restrictions

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2022
Political transition	The April change of government brought heightened political tensions and a contentious environment for journalists covering parties and demonstrations.
PEMRA restrictions	The regulator issued coverage directives and temporarily suspended the broadcasts of ARY News and BOL News.
Ban on live speeches	PEMRA restricted the live broadcast of former prime minister Imran Khan's speeches.
Arrests and criminal cases	Journalists, including Imran Riaz Khan, faced arrests or criminal proceedings that raised concerns about the use of legal processes to pressure media professionals.
FIA inquiries	The Federal Investigation Agency pursued cases and inquiries involving journalists; press-freedom organisations questioned whether some were used to discourage critical reporting.

(CONTINUED)

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2022
Threats and physical violence	PPF recorded at least 30 physical assaults and 12 instances of threats against media professionals.
Political rhetoric	Media organisations warned that hostile statements about journalists could encourage harassment and attacks, particularly during protests and rallies.
Women journalists	Women media professionals faced gendered online harassment and abusive campaigns connected to their political reporting and commentary.

International reports and findings

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDINGS
RSF, World Press Freedom Index 2022	Ranked Pakistan 157th out of 180 countries.
IFJ, 2022 Killed Journalists Report	Recorded five journalists and media workers killed in Pakistan under its methodology.
PPF, Press Freedom in Pakistan 2022	Recorded two deaths connected to journalistic work, at least 30 physical assaults, at least 12 threats, at least 10 work-related arrests and cases against at least nine media professionals.
Freedom Network, Pakistan Press Freedom Report 2022	Documented 86 attacks and violations between May 2021 and April 2022, including killings, legal cases, harassment, detentions, attempted murders and threats.
US Department of State, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan	Documented threats, harassment, abductions, violence, killings, self-censorship and restrictions affecting journalists and media organisations.
Freedom Network, Impunity of Crimes Against Journalists Pakistan Report 2022	Examined 53 journalist murders recorded between 2012 and 2022 and found convictions in only two cases.

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COUNTRY SITUATION

Year 2023

In 2023, the political crisis intensified after the arrest of former prime minister and PTI chairman Imran Khan on 9 May. Nationwide protests and clashes were followed by attacks on journalists and media organisations, detentions of media workers, and restrictions on internet and social-media access. One of the most prominent cases was television anchor Imran Riaz Khan, arrested at Sialkot Airport on 11 May and missing for more than four months until he returned home on 25 September; who held him was not publicly established. Freedom Network documented 125 threat cases in calendar year 2023, including two murders, 17 assaults resulting in injuries and 20 legal cases; its separate annual report documented 140 cases between May 2022 and March 2023. RSF ranked Pakistan 150th out of 180, up from 157th, but killings, disappearances, legal pressure and digital restrictions persisted.

Annual statistics

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Threats and attacks against journalists and media assistants	125	Freedom Network, January–December 2023
Journalists murdered	2	Freedom Network, calendar-year 2023 dataset
Journalists listed as killed	3	Rural Media Network Pakistan, calendar year 2023

(CONTINUED)

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Assaults resulting in injuries	17	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Assaults without reported injury	21	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Legal cases, civil or criminal	20	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Arrests based on a case or formal accusation	3	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Detentions without a formal case	9	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Disappearances attributed to unknown sources	3	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Kidnappings attributed to known sources	2	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Attempted murders	5	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Threats to murder	5	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Attacks on journalists' homes, property or assets	5	Freedom Network, calendar year 2023
Violations involving threats and attacks against journalists and media organisations	140	Freedom Network, May 2022–March 2023
Cases recorded in the Pakistan Impunity Watch database	149	Pakistan Impunity Watch, calendar-year 2023 database
RSF World Press Freedom Index position	150/180	RSF, 2023

Major cases and incidents

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
April 2023	Akash Ram	The marketing director at Bol Media Group was reported kidnapped in Karachi. His whereabouts remained unknown at the time of publication.
19–20 April 2023	Gohar Wazir	The Khyber News journalist and president of the National Press Club Bannu was abducted by unidentified men and held for about 30 hours. He alleged torture, including electric shocks.
2023, reported in May	Irfan Kalhoro and Paryal Dayo	The IFJ reported that the two senior journalists in Sindh had been kidnapped, tortured and sexually assaulted.
4 May 2023	Imtiaz Baig	The Samaa TV correspondent in Jhelum was attacked with blunt weapons, sustaining serious head injuries, and later died.
9–12 May 2023	Attacks on journalists during PTI protests	Journalists and media crews faced attacks, harassment and detentions after Imran Khan's arrest, including an attack on Nisar Ali Khan of Chhachh News Network in Lahore and on media teams in Peshawar.
10 May 2023	Radio Pakistan premises, Peshawar	Protesters vandalised and set fire to parts of the premises; equipment, vehicles and other property were damaged.
11 May 2023	Imran Riaz Khan	The anchor was arrested at Sialkot Airport and then disappeared from public view for more than four months, prompting court proceedings and demands for his recovery.
7 August 2023	Ghulam Asghar Khand	The correspondent for Sindhi-language newspaper <i>Sobh</i> was shot dead in Khairpur district, Sindh, per Rural Media Network

(CONTINUED)

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
13 August 2023	Jan Muhammad Mahar	The senior journalist and Kawish Television Network's Sukkur bureau chief was shot by armed men on Queens Road in Sukkur and died while receiving treatment.
25 September 2023	Recovery of Imran Riaz Khan	Police and fellow journalists confirmed that Khan had returned home. No public explanation established who held him.

Censorship, arrests and media restrictions

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2023
Internet shutdowns	After Imran Khan's arrest on 9 May, authorities suspended mobile internet in various areas and restricted Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (now X).
Attacks during protests	Journalists and crews were attacked, harassed or detained while covering demonstrations; equipment and premises were damaged.
Arrest and disappearance of Imran Riaz Khan	Arrested on 11 May and missing until 25 September; his case became a major international concern about due process and journalist safety.
Abduction and alleged torture	Gohar Wazir reported being abducted and tortured in April; other regional journalists also reported kidnapping and violence.
Criminal proceedings	Journalists faced criminal and cybercrime cases over speeches, online content and alleged criticism of state institutions.
Digital censorship	In December, connectivity was disrupted during a PTI virtual rally; Freedom Network reported YouTube, X and Facebook slowed to the point of severely impeding viewing.

(CONTINUED)

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2023
Harassment of women journalists	In December, digital journalist Fatima Razzaq reported that plainclothes men questioned her about her coverage of the Baloch women's protest in Islamabad, demanded her camera and searched her phone.

International reports and findings

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDINGS
RSF, World Press Freedom Index 2023	Ranked Pakistan 150th out of 180, up from 157th; the improvement did not mean killings, intimidation, censorship and legal pressure had ended.
Freedom Network, January–December 2023 Threat Data Analysis	Documented 125 cases, including two murders, 17 assaults resulting in injuries and 20 legal cases.
Freedom Network, Pakistan Press Freedom Report 2023	Recorded 140 violations between May 2022 and March 2023, about 63% more than the 86 cases in the preceding May–April period; Islamabad was identified as the riskiest region.
PPF, review of 2023	Highlighted killings, abductions, attacks, enforced disappearance and the wider problem of impunity.
CPJ, Global Impunity Index 2023	Ranked Pakistan 11th among countries with the worst records of prosecuting killers of journalists, based on unresolved murders over a longer period.
IFJ, South Asia Press Freedom Report 2023–24	Described arrests, legal cases, intimidation and internet restrictions during the political transition; its period extends beyond 2023.
United Nations human-rights experts	Raised concerns through formal communications about freedom of expression and the case of Imran Riaz Khan; such communications are not final judicial findings.

(CONTINUED)

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDINGS
UNESCO	Condemned the killing of Jan Muhammad Mahar and called for those responsible to be brought to justice.
Human Rights Watch, World Report 2024 — Pakistan	Documented broader concerns about freedom of expression, political rights and treatment of critics during 2023.

The persistence of unresolved cases in 2023 showed that legal protections alone were insufficient without effective investigations, operational safety mechanisms and accountability for those responsible.

11

COUNTRY SITUATION

Year 2024

2024 was one of the most dangerous recent years for journalists in Pakistan: PPF documented at least 168 attacks and censorship-related violations, including two murders, 76 assaults, four abductions, five arrests, 12 detentions, 15 cases registered against media professionals, eight instances of FIA action, 15 instances of online harassment and 31 censorship-related incidents. The 8 February general election, protests over disputed results and continuing political tensions made independent journalism increasingly difficult.

Journalist killings were among the most alarming developments. Victims included Muhammad Siddique Mengal in Balochistan, Nasrullah Gadani in Sindh, Kamran Dawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Khalil Jibran in the former FATA region, now part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Monitoring organisations differed in their totals because their criteria for linking a killing to journalistic work were not identical.

In January, the FIA issued notices to dozens of journalists and YouTubers over alleged online attacks on superior-court judges; the Supreme Court intervened, emphasising that journalists should not face legal action merely for criticising judicial decisions. Freelance journalist Asad Ali Toor was arrested in February over online content. Mobile-phone services were suspended on election day, access to X was blocked from February onward, and internet disruptions were reported during protests. RSF ranked Pakistan 152nd out of 180, down from 150th.

Annual statistics

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Attacks on journalists and media professionals, including censorship-related violations	168	PPF, January–December 2024
Murders included in PPF's annual total	2	PPF, calendar year 2024
Assaults	76	PPF, calendar year 2024
Abductions	4	PPF, calendar year 2024
Attacks on property	12	PPF, calendar year 2024
Arrests	5	PPF, calendar year 2024
Detentions	12	PPF, calendar year 2024
Cases registered against media professionals	15	PPF, calendar year 2024
Instances of FIA action	8	PPF, calendar year 2024
Other legal actions	2	PPF, calendar year 2024
Journalists placed on the Exit Control List	2	PPF, calendar year 2024
Online harassment incidents	15	PPF, calendar year 2024
Recorded threats	5	PPF, calendar year 2024
Censorship-related incidents	31	PPF, calendar year 2024
Internet, mobile-connectivity and social-media disruptions	19	PPF, calendar year 2024
Restrictive PEMRA directives	4	PPF, calendar year 2024

(CONTINUED)

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Journalists and other media professionals killed	6	Freedom Network, November 2023–August 2024
Total violations against media practitioners	57	Freedom Network, November 2023–August 2024
Journalists listed as killed in Pakistan	7	IFJ, calendar year 2024
RSF World Press Freedom Index position	152/180	RSF, 2024

Major cases and incidents

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
3 January 2024	Shoaib Jutt	The Karachi-based sports journalist reportedly received death threats after his coverage of Pakistan's 2023 Cricket World Cup performance. An armed man confronted him outside his home, took his phone and threatened him and his family.
January 2024	FIA notices to journalists	The FIA summoned 47 journalists and YouTubers in an investigation into alleged online misinformation and defamatory content targeting superior-court judges.
19 January 2024	Shoaib Burney	The Suno TV Karachi bureau chief was shot in the arm by unidentified motorcyclists at a wedding; the IFJ reported no arrests at the time.
8 February 2024	Election-day communications shutdown	Mobile-phone services were suspended nationwide on election day, citing security, disrupting election coverage and public access to information.

(CONTINUED)

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
26 February 2024	Asad Ali Toor	The freelance journalist was arrested by the FIA in Islamabad over online content about superior-court judges; released on bail on 16 March.
14 March 2024	Sagheer Ahmed Laar	The veteran <i>Daily Khabrain</i> correspondent was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Khanpur, Punjab.
11 March / 22 April 2024	Tahira Nosheen Rana	The local journalist's body was discovered in Sohawa, Jhelum district, in March; Rural Media Network Pakistan records 22 April as the date of killing.
3 May 2024	Muhammad Siddique Mengal	The president of the Khuzdar Press Club was killed in a bomb attack on a vehicle carrying him in Balochistan.
15 May 2024	Meher Ashfaq Sial	The <i>Daily Khabrain</i> correspondent in Muzaffargarh was reported killed.
21–24 May 2024	Kamran Dawar and Nasrullah Gadani	Digital journalist Kamran Dawar was shot dead in North Waziristan on 21 May. Sindhi journalist Nasrullah Gadani, also shot on 21 May, died on 24 May.
18 June 2024	Khalil Jibran	The Khyber News journalist was shot dead near Landi Kotal in Khyber district; he had reportedly received threats and survived previous attempts on his life.
14 July 2024	Malik Hassan Zaib	The <i>Daily Aaj</i> correspondent in Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was shot dead by unidentified armed men.
September–October 2024	Attacks during political protests	Journalists covering protests, including PTI demonstrations, reported assaults, detentions and interference by police and protesters.
November 2024	Further protests and media restrictions	During renewed unrest, journalists and outlets reported

Censorship, arrests and media restrictions

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2024
FIA notices to journalists	Notices to 47 journalists and YouTubers reached the Supreme Court, which emphasised that criticism of judicial decisions should not itself lead to criminal action.
Arrest of Asad Ali Toor	Arrested in February over online content; granted bail and released in March.
Arrests involving Imran Riaz Khan	Arrested in February on terrorism-related allegations over online criticism of state institutions and ordered released the next day; arrested again in late February and early March in separate cases, with courts subsequently ordering his release.
Election-day mobile shutdown	Mobile services were suspended on 8 February, limiting election coverage.
Blocking of X	The platform remained inaccessible to many users from February onward.
Internet restrictions during protests	PPF documented repeated internet, mobile and social-media disruptions.
Attacks during demonstrations	Journalists were attacked, detained or obstructed while covering protests; media organisations and press clubs reported damage or interference.
Online harassment	PPF recorded 15 incidents; women journalists remained particularly vulnerable to gendered abuse.
PEMRA directives	PPF documented four restrictive PEMRA directives alongside other actions it classified as censorship.
Legal and economic pressure	Criminal cases, investigations, threats and restrictions contributed to self-censorship and the financial vulnerability of news organisations.

International reports and findings

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDINGS
RSF, World Press Freedom Index 2024	Ranked Pakistan 152nd out of 180, down from 150th in 2023.
PPF, <i>Intimidation on All Fronts: Press Freedom and Media Safety in Pakistan</i>	Documented 168 attacks and censorship-related violations in January–December 2024.
Freedom Network, <i>Crime and Punishment in Pakistan's Journalism World – Impunity Report 2024</i>	Documented 57 cases between November 2023 and August 2024, including six killings, four unsuccessful assassination attempts, 19 physical assaults and nine legal actions; Sindh accounted for 21 of the 57.
IFJ, 2024 Killed Journalists Report	Recorded seven journalists killed in Pakistan and called for thorough, transparent investigations.
CPJ, Global Impunity Index 2024	Continued to identify Pakistan among countries with serious problems prosecuting those responsible for journalist murders.
IFJ and PFUJ, reports on the killings of Kamran Dawar and Nasrullah Gadani	Condemned the killings and called for immediate, transparent investigations and improved protection.
IFJ, <i>Pakistan: Authorities Summon 47 Journalists</i>	The IFJ and PFUJ criticised the FIA summonses as a threat to independent journalism.
US Department of State, 2024 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan	Documented violence against journalists, unjustified arrests, disappearances, censorship, threats and harassment.
Human Rights Watch, <i>World Report 2025 – Pakistan</i>	Reported concerns about political rights, freedom of expression, state repression and restrictions on civil liberties during 2024.

12

COUNTRY SITUATION

Year 2025

In 2025, legal pressure grew alongside physical attacks, arrests, threats, digital censorship and impunity. In January, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act 2025 introduced Section 26-A, which criminalises the intentional dissemination of certain false or fake information likely to cause fear, panic, disorder or unrest, with up to three years' imprisonment, a fine of up to Rs2 million, or both. Journalists, media organisations and digital-rights advocates warned that its broad language could discourage investigative reporting and criticism of public institutions.

PPF documented at least 146 attacks on journalists and media professionals, and attempts to restrict free expression, during the year. Freedom Network's impunity report recorded at least 142 violations in November 2024–September 2025, about 60% more than the preceding period, and 36 formal legal cases against 30 journalists and media practitioners under PECA and the Pakistan Penal Code. The IFJ identified three Pakistani journalists killed: Abdul Latif Baloch, Khawar Hussain and Imtiaz Mir. The federal Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals was established in November, a long-delayed institutional development. RSF ranked Pakistan 158th out of 180, its lowest position in the period.

Annual statistics

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Attacks on journalists and media professionals, including attempts to restrict free expression	At least 146	PPF, January–December 2025

(CONTINUED)

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Physical assaults and manhandling	38	PPF, calendar year 2025
Journalists injured in accidents while on assignment	2	PPF, calendar year 2025
Detentions	5	PPF, calendar year 2025
Abductions	2	PPF, calendar year 2025
Attacks on property, including raids	4	PPF, calendar year 2025
Arrests	8	PPF, calendar year 2025
Cases registered against journalists and media professionals	30	PPF, calendar year 2025
Documented legal actions, including FIA and NCCIA proceedings	24	PPF, calendar year 2025
Threats, including online threats and harassment	10	PPF, calendar year 2025
Threats of legal action	3	PPF, calendar year 2025
Harassment and intimidation, including pressure involving journalists' families	9	PPF, calendar year 2025
Journalists placed on the No-Fly List	2	PPF, calendar year 2025
Journalists killed in Pakistan	3	IFJ, calendar year 2025
Violations against journalists and other media professionals	142	Freedom Network, November 2024–September 2025
Formal legal cases under PECA and the Pakistan Penal Code	36 cases involving 30 individuals	Freedom Network, November 2024–September 2025
RSF World Press Freedom Index position	158/180	RSF, 2025

Major cases and incidents

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
6 January 2025	Naveed Panhwar and Irfan Baloch	The Mehran TV and Dharti TV reporters were reportedly assaulted by police while covering a fight at a restaurant in Kotri, Sindh.
6 January 2025	ARY News programme <i>Sar-e-Aam</i> team	Team members were attacked by a mob in Karachi's Lyari area during a sting operation.
13 January 2025	Amjad Shah	The BOL News cameraman was reportedly assaulted by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) workers while covering a press conference by Maulana Fazlur Rehman in Karachi.
January 2025	Protests against PECA amendments	Journalists and media workers protested the proposed changes, warning they could restrict online journalism and freedom of expression.
1 March 2025	Quetta Press Club	Police forcibly entered the press club, according to PPF.
20 March 2025	Farhan Mallick	The founder of YouTube channel Raftar was arrested and handed over to the FIA in a case involving alleged anti-state content.
20 March 2025	Mian Munawar Iqbal	The 7 News bureau chief in Faisalabad was reportedly manhandled by armed men.
26 March 2025	Irfan Laghari	The 92 News reporter was reportedly assaulted in Tank district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, after publishing material on alleged corruption in a regional development scheme.
24 May 2025	Abdul Latif Baloch	The correspondent for a Quetta-based newspaper was shot dead at his home in Mashkay, Awaran district, Balochistan.
2 June 2025	Badin Press Club	A group allegedly linked to a

(CONTINUED)

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
16 August 2025	Khawar Hussain	The Karachi-based journalist was found shot dead in his vehicle in Sanghar district, Sindh, according to the IFJ.
30 August 2025	Irfanullah and Ali Arsalan	The Geo News reporter and cameraman were reportedly assaulted and forcibly removed by Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (PERA) personnel while covering flood-affected residents in Faisalabad.
21–28 September 2025	Imtiaz Mir	The Metro 1 TV anchorperson was shot by armed assailants in Karachi on 21 September while travelling with his brother, and died on 28 September.
2 October 2025	National Press Club, Islamabad	Police reportedly raided the club and assaulted journalists on the premises.

Censorship, arrests and media restrictions

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2025
PECA amendments	The Act became law in January; Section 26-A introduced criminal penalties for certain false or fake online information.
Arrest of Farhan Mallick	His 20 March arrest over alleged anti-state content intensified concerns about cybercrime laws being used against digital journalism.
Criminal cases and FIA/NCCIA action	Journalists faced complaints, summons, arrests and investigations by the FIA and, after institutional changes, the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA).
Online expression	Commentators warned that the broad false-information offence could expose critical reporting and public-interest investigations to prosecution.

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ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2025
Press-club raids and attacks	Quetta Press Club entered by police in March; Badin Press Club attacked in June; National Press Club, Islamabad, raided in October.
Digital restrictions and online harassment	Journalists continued to face online threats; PPF documented restrictions on internet access, reporting from sensitive locations and political content.
Federal journalist-protection commission	Established in November; its effectiveness depends on subsequent rules, resources, independence and ability to investigate complaints.

International reports and findings

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDINGS
RSF, World Press Freedom Index 2025	Ranked Pakistan 158th out of 180 countries.
PPF, <i>Attacked, Threatened, Booked and Silenced</i>	Documented at least 137 attacks and censorship-related violations between January and October 2025.
PPF, year-end 2025 review	Recorded at least 146 attacks and attempts to restrict free expression in the calendar year, highlighting physical violence, criminal proceedings and impunity.
Freedom Network, <i>Crime and Punishment in Pakistan's Journalism World – Impunity Report 2025</i>	Documented 142 violations in November 2024–September 2025, about 60% more than the preceding period, and 36 legal cases involving 30 people.
IFJ, 2025 Killed Journalists Report	Recorded three journalists killed and called for effective investigations and accountability.
CPJ, journalist-safety monitoring	Continued to identify impunity for journalist murders as a major problem, based on unresolved killings over a longer period.

(CONTINUED)

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDINGS
IFJ and PFUJ, reports on attacks against journalists	Condemned assaults during field reporting and the killings of journalists; called for protection and accountability.
Human Rights Watch, World Report 2026 — Pakistan	Examined restrictions on expression and political freedoms during 2025.

13 COUNTRY SITUATION Year 2026 (January–October)

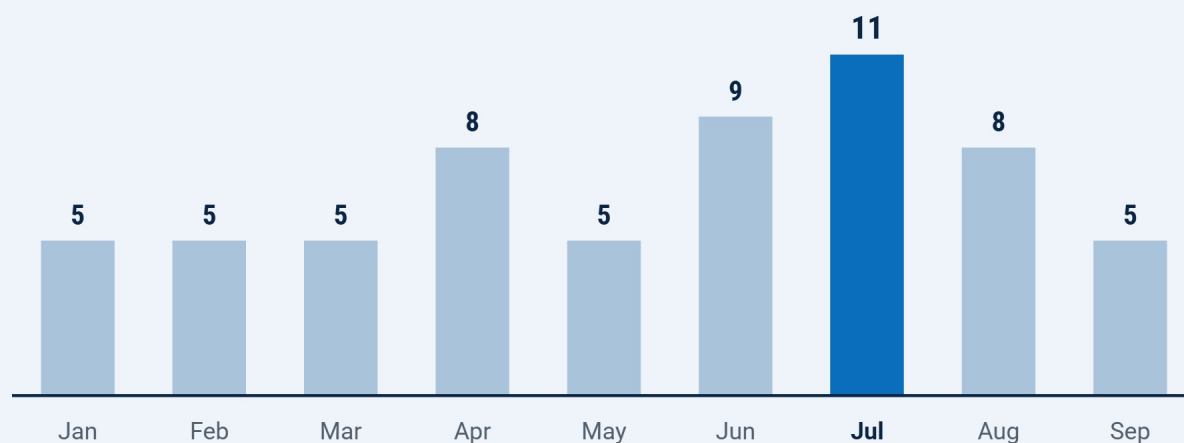
The first ten months of 2026 were marked by continued legal pressure, physical attacks, threats, arrests, digital restrictions and concerns about journalist safety, with cybercrime cases under PECA brought by the NCCIA at the centre. Freedom Network's nine published monthly reports recorded 61 cases from January to September; this is the sum of the reports' published figures, not a verified count of 61 unique journalists or a complete national census, and its separate quarterly reports use their own verification and may produce different totals. RSF ranked Pakistan 153rd out of 180, up five places from 158th in 2025; the improvement did not mean conditions had become safe or that violations had ended.

The economic vulnerability of journalists also remained a concern. Freedom Network's September monitoring described public remarks by BOL News anchor Absa Komal about delayed salaries and the treatment of journalists, followed by reports that she had been removed from air or dismissed. Neither Komal nor the channel publicly confirmed a termination or its reason, illustrating how hard it is to establish whether employment decisions are linked to editorial pressure.

FIGURE

Monthly threat cases peaked at 11 in July 2026

Freedom Network monthly reports, January–September 2026: 61 cases in total (sum of published monthly figures)



Freedom Network's quarterly reports, verified separately, give 18 cases for Q1 and 22 for Q2.

Source: Freedom Network monthly reports, January–September 2026, as compiled in this report

Annual statistics

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Total of monthly threat and violation cases	61	Arithmetic sum of Freedom Network's monthly reports, January–September 2026; not a unique-person count
Threat cases documented in the first quarter	18	Freedom Network, January–March 2026 quarterly report
Threat cases documented in the second quarter	22	Freedom Network, April–June 2026 quarterly report

(CONTINUED)

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE	SOURCE AND REPORTING PERIOD
Incidents of violence, threats, legal action and restrictions	At least 233	PPF, January 2025–April 2026
Assaults	67	PPF, January 2025–April 2026
Criminal complaints	67	PPF, January 2025–April 2026
Criminal complaints involving PECA	34	PPF, January 2025–April 2026
Arrests	11	PPF, January 2025–April 2026
Detentions	11	PPF, January 2025–April 2026
Abductions	3	PPF, January 2025–April 2026
RSF World Press Freedom Index position	153/180	RSF, 2026

The PPF figures span January 2025 to April 2026, crossing two calendar years; they overlap with the 2025 figures above and should not be treated as a 2026-only total.

Major cases and incidents

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
1–7 January 2026	Nadir Baloch	The HUM News journalist and digital content creator was summoned by the NCCIA in Lahore in an alleged online-defamation inquiry.
25 January 2026	Shahzad Gujjar	The <i>Naya Daur</i> district reporter was shot dead in Chowk Azam, Layyah, Punjab.

(CONTINUED)

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
27 January 2026	Awardin Mehsood	The president of the Tribal Union of Journalists in South Waziristan was summoned by cybercrime authorities in Peshawar after an online-defamation complaint.
28 January 2026	Khalid Masood and Ismail Aslam	The <i>Daily Khabrain</i> journalists were reportedly intimidated while covering medicine shortages and absent doctors at DHQ Hospital, Vehari, during a visit by Punjab's health secretary.
8 February 2026	Muhammad Bilal Ghauri	The journalist and columnist was briefly stopped and detained by immigration authorities at Karachi airport while preparing to travel to Bangladesh.
12 February 2026	Ihsan Ullah Khattak	Unidentified armed individuals reportedly fired on the home of the senior journalist and former Bannu Press Club president.
13 February 2026	Khurram Iqbal	The Hum News journalist was reportedly taken by unidentified men in Lahore and held by the NCCIA for several hours before release.
8 March 2026	Women journalists arrested during Aurat March	Farhat Fatima (APP), Sehrish Qureshi (Independent Urdu) and Ismat Jabeen (DW Urdu) were among women arrested during the Aurat March in Islamabad; journalist organisations condemned the arrests.
9 May 2026	Maqbool Jaffar	The Quetta freelance journalist was arrested by the NCCIA over social-media content about government officials and state institutions.
5 June 2026	Sohrab Barkat	CPJ reported that the Islamabad-based journalist was arrested over reporting on protests in Pakistan-administered Kashmir; 51 the NCCIA registered a PECA case alleging dissemination of

(CONTINUED)

DATE	JOURNALIST / INCIDENT	DETAILS
23 June 2026	Razi Tahir	The independent journalist was arrested by the NCCIA at the Islamabad District Courts after his pre-arrest bail was dismissed, in a case under Sections 20 and 26-A of PECA over a social-media post about a reported meeting involving Imran Khan. Released on bail on 8 July.
22 July 2026	Munizae Jahangir	The veteran journalist presented the final episode of <i>Spotlight</i> on Aaj TV after more than 11 years; no official reason was given.
1 August 2026	Razi Tahir, Raja Ikram and Muhammad Saif	Razi Tahir and Muhammad Saif were reportedly taken from their Islamabad office by men in police uniforms after covering protests linked to unrest in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. CPJ called for their whereabouts to be disclosed; the IFJ and PFUJ raised concerns about their reported disappearance. Raja Ikram was also reportedly detained and later released.
5–16 September 2026	Muhammad Bilal Ghauri	The columnist and YouTube commentator was detained by the NCCIA in a PECA case over online commentary on a senior security official's appointment.
15 September 2026	Asad Ali Toor	The journalist and vlogger received an NCCIA notice to appear for an inquiry under Section 26-A of PECA over claims about an alleged visit by a senior intelligence official to Adiala Jail and a meeting with Imran Khan.
12–22 October 2026	Iqrar-ul-Hassan	The anchorperson was arrested in a cybercrime case over alleged anti-state, false and defamatory social-media content. A Karachi magistrate remanded him to NCCIA custody, sent him on judicial remand on 19 October, and rejected his bail plea on 22

Censorship, arrests and media restrictions

ISSUE	DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN 2026
PECA enforcement	The 2025 amendments continued to drive investigations and cases over online journalism, commentary and social-media posts.
NCCIA investigations	Journalists and commentators including Maqbool Jaffar, Syed Zeeshan Gillani, Muhammad Bilal Ghauri and Iqrar-ul-Hassan faced cybercrime investigations or proceedings.
Criminal complaints over reporting	Complaints were reported over coverage of development projects, public institutions, alleged corruption, local disputes and commentary on state officials.
Detention and arrest	Journalists were detained or arrested in several cases, including women journalists at the Aurat March and journalists held over online content.
Website accessibility	Digital platform Lok Sujag reported temporary inaccessibility of its website within Pakistan, with no official explanation.
Political-event reporting	An Aaj News team was injured during clashes around a political rally in Karachi.
Threats and attacks on homes	Firing at Ihsan Ullah Khattak's residence in Bannu and a reported armed attack on Inam Ullah at his home in Vehari.
Digital and online harassment	Freedom Network documented threats and legal action linked to social-media commentary; AI-related abuse and online intimidation remained wider concerns.
Economic pressure	Delayed salaries, employment insecurity and concern over editorial independence persisted, including concerns raised by anchor Absa Komal.
Broadcast and editorial restrictions	The discontinuation of Munizae Jahangir's <i>Spotlight</i> prompted speculation about external pressure, but no causal link was publicly confirmed.

International reports and findings

ORGANISATION / REPORT	MAIN FINDINGS
RSF, World Press Freedom Index 2026	Ranked Pakistan 153rd out of 180, up from 158th in 2025.
PPF, World Press Freedom Day 2026 report	Documented at least 233 instances of violence, threats, legal action and restrictions between January 2025 and April 2026.
Freedom Network, first-quarter threat assessment	Documented 18 threat cases in January–March 2026; state actors were identified as involved in 14 of the 18. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded the most cases.
Freedom Network, second-quarter threat assessment	Recorded 22 cases in April–June 2026, up from 18 in the first quarter.
IFJ, Pakistan Press Freedom Report 2025–26	Described a deteriorating environment shaped by PECA, digital restrictions, legal pressure, physical violence and economic challenges.
CPJ	Published case alerts on Sohrab Barkat and Muhammad Bilal Ghauri, among others, and called for due process.
Human-rights and digital-rights organisations	Continued to raise concerns about restrictions on expression, online harassment, cybercrime enforcement and journalist safety.

By 23 October 2026, Pakistan's press-freedom environment continued to be characterised by legal pressure, threats, physical violence and economic insecurity. Protecting journalists requires effective investigation of attacks, fair legal procedures, safeguards for legitimate journalism, transparent decisions about digital restrictions and practical support for media workers.

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