



*Permanent Delegation of Pakistan  
to UNESCO*

No. PDU-2/CI/18

August 16, 2018

Subject: **Safety of Journalists and Freedom of Expression**

I write with reference to your letter No.CI/FEM/FOE/Fr/2018 dated 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2018.

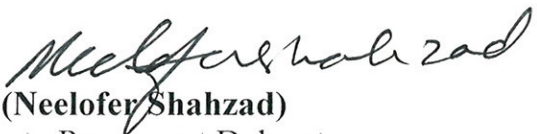
2. The Government of Pakistan attaches great importance to safety of journalists and freedom of expression. Media in Pakistan is free and forms an important part of the democratic process. The freedom of expression is guaranteed under the Constitution of Pakistan.

3. We have already requested the stakeholder ministries in Pakistan to update the report on the status of criminal proceedings and investigations which was submitted to UNESCO vide our letter No.PDU-2/CI/15 dated 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2017. The updated status will be forwarded to UNESCO as soon as it is received.

4. Pakistan is committed to ensure safety of media houses and media persons which is reflected in the number of concrete and tangible steps Pakistan has taken over the past few years. A brief account of these steps is attached for ready reference. This account can be shared by UNESCO with its member countries as a best practice and can also be placed on UNESCO's website.

With best regards,

Yours Sincerely,

  
(Neelofer Shahzad)

Deputy Permanent Delegate

**Mr. Guy Berger,**

Director

Division of Freedom of Expression and Media Development

Communication and Information Section,

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

## **BEST PRACTICES OF PAKISTAN TO ENSURE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA HOUSES**

Pakistan has been facing the scourge of terrorism for last many years. It has sacrificed over 60,000 precious lives including civilians, personnel of law enforcement agencies and journalists. The journalists are not specifically targeted but have lost their lives in the line of duty and as part of casualties of acts of terrorism.

Pakistan is fully committed to freedom of speech and expression as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Constitution of Pakistan. It has taken a number of concrete and tangible measures to ensure safety of media houses and media persons. A few such steps are enumerated below:

- i. In Pakistan, a national consultative meeting took place in June 2012 which produced two instruments: one a draft of *National Plan of Action on Safety of Pakistani Journalists and Media* and second Islamabad Declaration to protect the journalists and media workers. This was followed up by an *International conference of Safety and Security of Journalists in Pakistan* in early March 2013. This conference created a formal protocol on the issue of safety of journalists and media houses.
- ii. A UN Plan of Action in Pakistan on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity aims to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers, both in conflict and non-conflict situations, with a view to strengthening peace, democracy and development worldwide was officially launched at the conference in March 2013. In June 2013 funding was raised from the Norwegian Refugee Council, to provide human resource to UNESCO to support the UN Plan of Action in Pakistan for one year.
- iii. The Pakistan Coalition on Media Safety (PCOMS) was subsequently created in Islamabad by a broad-based alliance of relevant stakeholders including representative associations of media workers, working journalists, media development organizations, human rights organizations, civil society groups, parliamentarians and the government.
- iv. In October 2013, a Steering Committee was established which included the Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Federal Interior Minister. This committee was mandated to undertake effective coordination with the Provincial Governments along with Media representative bodies to assess the threat levels for the media and provide necessary security to the Journalists and media houses. This Committee convened more than six meetings with all key media representative bodies and have put in place following security measures:
  - a. Security audit of Media Houses at Federal and Provincial level;
  - b. Setting up a panic alert button application in all media houses of Islamabad which was replicated at the Provincial Headquarters in order to provide prompt response to media persons and houses in emergency situations;

- c. Deployment of Police guards in plain clothes around media houses;
  - d. Appointment of Senior police officers as focal persons in all provincial Police Departments to address security related issues of media persons;
  - e. Holding of regular coordination meetings between Media Houses and Security agencies regarding beefing up overall security canvass of Media persons;
  - f. Training of security guards of the media houses;
  - g. Setting up of Media Security Committees at the provincial level;
  - h. Setting up of Security Committees by the Media houses to formulate their own ground rules for coverage of crime scenes and terrorism-related incidents in consultation with law enforcement agencies.
- v. Adding to the momentum of the UN Plan of Action, Pakistan's Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage created a special unit in its Press Information Department to monitor threats against media professionals and to take concrete steps to counter such threats.
  - vi. A special fund with an endowment has been established at Ministry level to provide financial assistance to the needy and deserving media persons.
  - vii. In April 2014, Government of Pakistan announced to create Media Commission to guarantee the safety of Pakistani Journalists. This Media Commission, consisting of both media workers and government officials, was mandated to set out measures to protect journalists in the field as well as to give recommendations on effectively monitoring the prosecution of crimes against media workers.
  - viii. The Government of Pakistan is working on Journalists Welfare and Protection Bill in consultation with relevant stake holders including Pakistan Federation Union of Journalists (PFUJ) to provide a legal framework to mitigate potential threats to journalists.
  - ix. The Government of Pakistan is also taking steps to speed up the prosecution of terrorists and criminals involved in murders of journalists. Special prosecutors have been appointed in all four provinces and also at Federal Capital to deal with cases involving crimes against journalists.
  - x. Pakistan is working with UNESCO Islamabad to involve relevant stakeholders for a series of policy dialogues to draft a model law on journalist's safety at provincial as well as federal level which could assist in developing appropriate national polices, and institutional frameworks to increase journalists' safety in Pakistan. UNESCO has shared international experiences on such laws with stakeholders in Pakistan.
  - xi. Pakistan is also one of the first countries to be piloting UNESCO's Journalists' Safety Indicators (JSI) in 2014, to lay out a baseline against which changes related to the UN Plan of Action can be assessed.
  - xii. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNESCO are also collaborating on a two-year project that contributes towards the safety and security of journalists.