



**CPJ Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of Afghanistan  
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Human Rights Council  
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**Committee to Protect Journalists**

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**Brief description of CPJ:**

1. The Committee to Protect Journalists is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide. We defend the right of journalists to report the news without fear of reprisal.
2. CPJ is made up of about 40 experts around the world, with headquarters in New York City. When press freedom violations occur, CPJ mobilizes a network of correspondents who report and take action on behalf of those targeted.
3. CPJ reports on violations in repressive countries, conflict zones, and established democracies alike. A board of prominent journalists from around the world helps guide CPJ's activities.
4. CPJ's work is based on its research, which provides a global snapshot of obstructions to a free press worldwide. CPJ's research staff document hundreds of attacks on the press each year.

**Summary:**

This submission was prepared for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Afghanistan in January 2019. In it, CPJ assesses the press freedom framework and the press freedom situation on the ground in the country.

Afghanistan has a vibrant private, independent media sector that has bravely reported on the difficult security situation facing the country. CPJ recognizes and applauds the fact that this has been possible only with the toleration and support of Afghanistan's national government.

Nonetheless, the media's ability to report the news has been heavily compromised by repeated deadly attacks from militant groups. While those attacks stem from Afghanistan's long-running civil war, CPJ believes that more can be done to pursue those who plan and executive crimes against journalists and to bring them to justice. Putting an end to impunity for such crimes would mark an important step in the enhancement of safety for journalists and media workers, and further guarantee freedom of the press.

In the final section of this document, CPJ makes a number of recommendations to Jordan to address the press freedom concerns raised in this submission.

**Main submission:**

5. The following submission is drawn from research conducted by the Committee to Protect Journalists. All CPJ publications on Afghanistan can be found at [this link](#).
6. CPJ would like to raise ongoing and grave concerns pertaining to 2nd Cycle (2014) - 18th Session - Recommendations from Theme: A, Paragraph 136.77 (Belgium), 136.78 (Belgium), 136.79 (Lithuania), 136.80 (Maldives). The concerns are as follows:
7. Journalists in Afghanistan operate in one of the most dangerous and deadly landscapes in the world, and have been frequent targets for non-state actors. The government has failed to prosecute and hold perpetrators of violence against journalists accountable.

8. On April 30, 2018, Afghanistan witnessed one of the deadliest days for the country's press when at least 10 journalists were killed, according to [CPJ documentation](#). Nine journalists were among at least 25 people killed in a double suicide bomb attack by the militant group Islamic State in Kabul. [A spokesperson](#) for Kabul police said that 30 minutes after the first attack, a bomber disguised as a member of the media set off his explosives among a group of journalists who had arrived to cover the earlier blast.
9. In a [separate attack](#) on April 30, 2018, unidentified gunmen shot dead a BBC Pashto journalist, [Ahmad Shah](#).
10. Less than a week before the April 30 attack, two unknown gunmen shot and killed Abdul Manan Arghand, a journalist for Kabul News, [CPJ reported](#). Arghand had received threatening anonymous phone calls over his reporting for a year. He had reported the threats to local police and the National Directorate of Security. No group has claimed responsibility for the shooting.
11. On December 28, 2017, at least [one journalist](#) was killed and four media workers were injured in an attack on a Shiite cultural center and office of news agency Afghan Voice in Kabul. The Islamic State claimed [responsibility](#) for the attack.
12. On November 7, 2017, gunmen and suicide bombers attacked [Shamshad TV](#), a leading Pashto-language station, killing one security guard and injuring at least 20 people, including television staffers.
13. On [May 31, 2017](#), at least two media workers were killed and nine others were injured in a massive bomb attack in Kabul, Afghanistan, in which a television station office was also partially destroyed.
14. On May 17, 2017, the Islamic State [attacked the Jalalabad office](#) of National Radio Television of Afghanistan and killed at least six people and injured at least 18 others.
15. None of the perpetrators of these attacks have been prosecuted and brought to justice.
16. At least [45 journalists have been killed](#) in direct relation to their work in Afghanistan since 1992, according to CPJ research. An additional eight media workers have been killed since 2003, when CPJ began formally tracking the deaths of translators, drivers, security guards, and others who play a vital role in news gathering.
17. Afghanistan ranked seventh in CPJ's [2016 Impunity Index](#), which highlights where journalists are killed and their killers go free.

18. Afghanistan has shown a willingness to work on press freedom and journalist safety, as seen by its support of the recommendations made in the 2014 UPR. But it must show a stronger commitment by demonstrating measurable progress in improving journalist safety within the country and ending impunity by bringing perpetrators of attacks to justice.

**Recommendations for the Afghan Government:**

19. Launch prompt and effective investigations into the attacks against journalists and news organizations and prosecute those responsible.
20. Take measures to ensure that perpetrators of attacks against journalists are prosecuted through the formal judicial system to stop the cycle of violence against journalists.
21. Enhance safety measures for journalists and news organizations that have come under threat from non-state actors by facilitating training, helping to enhance physical security measures, and providing protection when needed.
22. Ensure that no government entity endorses the restriction of freedom of press in any way whatsoever.
23. These recommendations are consistent with those supported by Afghanistan in their 2nd periodic review.

**Annex 1: Relevant recommendations from 2nd Cycle (2014) - 18th session:**

Theme: Freedom of opinion and expression

1. A-136.78 Ensure that no governmental entity endorses the restriction of freedom of expression in any way whatsoever (Belgium);
  - a. Source of position:A/HRC/26/4
2. A-136.79 Ensure that no government entities restrict the right to freedom of expression and that media regulations conform to Afghanistan's international human rights obligations, and ensure prompt and effective investigations of threats, attacks, and killings of journalists in order to prevent them and to bring those responsible to justice (Lithuania);
  - a. Source of position:A/HRC/26/4
3. A-136.80 Allow journalists, human rights defenders among all others to exercise the right to freedom of expression (Maldives)
  - a. Source of position:A/HRC/26/4

Theme: Freedom of the press

1. A-136.77 Ensure that any physical and moral harm against journalists or human rights defenders is subjected to an investigation and that those responsible are duly prosecuted (Belgium)
  - a. Source of position:A/HRC/26/4
2. A-136.80 Allow journalists, human rights defenders among all others to exercise the right to freedom of expression (Maldives)

- a. Source of position:A/HRC/26/4

Theme: Impunity

1. A-136.103 Take measures to ensure that many individuals who are guilty of violence are effectively convicted and put an end to the impunity from which they benefit too often (Belgium);
  - a. Source of position:A/HRC/26/4
2. A - 136.106 Continue efforts aimed at putting an end to impunity, and guarantee an effective and impartial application of the legislation and court rulings, through the formal judicial system (Argentina);
  - a. Source of position:A/HRC/26/4

Theme: Public Security

3. A-136.15 Continue its efforts to enhance the rule of law and ensure peace and safety in its society (Singapore);
  - a. Source of position:A/HRC/26/4
4. A-136.81 Continue measures to combat terrorism, including the financing of terrorism (Sri Lanka)
  - a. Source of position:A/HRC/26/4