



## 4.6. Journalists and media workers

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Media freedom has continued to decline, with increasing limitations placed on national and international broadcasters.<sup>1519</sup> According to the 2025 RSF World Press Freedom Index, Afghanistan ranked 175 out of 180 countries, reflecting a decline of 23 positions compared to year 2023.<sup>1520</sup> By 2025, the Afghan media landscape has been ‘decimated’, as described by RSF, and ‘devoid of pluralism and dissenting voices’.<sup>1521</sup> More information on civic space and freedom of expression is available in section [1.1.1. Political opposition and civic space](#).

Since the Taliban takeover, the de facto authorities have issued several verbal and written instructions limiting the work of Afghan media,<sup>1522</sup> including on publishing content that is indecent, profane,<sup>1523</sup> insulting national figures,<sup>1524</sup> or considered defamation and ‘unproven criticism’ of de facto officials.<sup>1525</sup> Article 17 of the ‘Morality law’ specifies that de facto MPVPV inspectors are to ensure contents of publication or public information do not contradict *sharia*, ‘deride or humiliate Muslims’, or include pictures of ‘animate objects’.<sup>1526</sup> A compilation of relevant national decrees and instructions issued since the Taliban takeover is available in [Annex 3: Lists of decrees and instructions](#).

Issued restrictions on the media have been vague and difficult to follow in practice.<sup>1527</sup> According to a compilation of the Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC), the de facto authorities have issued a number of directives that run in parallel with official laws. Although these directives have not been ‘issued by a single authority or following proper legal procedures’, they have restricted the work of journalists and media personnel.<sup>1528</sup> Reporters Without Borders (RSF) also noted a ‘particularly confusing situation for journalists’ receiving directives from various de facto authorities.<sup>1529</sup> UNAMA also outlined how the de facto authorities have established various ‘red lines’ for reporting, i.e. ‘no-go areas’, which are informal and broad. These include any content deemed contrary to *sharia*, Afghan culture, and national interests, and have been subject to ongoing and fluctuating interpretation.<sup>1530</sup>

In the period 29 September–1 October 2025, Afghanistan experienced an almost complete shutdown of internet connectivity and mobile phone services.<sup>1531</sup> UNAMA reported that media outlets relying on the internet to transmit, halted operations entirely, and journalists could not collect information via internet or telephone.<sup>1532</sup> More information on this event is available in section [1.1.1. Political opposition and civic space](#).

The prohibition of images of living beings and music further limits the public information space and freedom of expression, as reported by UNAMA.<sup>1533</sup> While prohibitions on images of living

beings existed in some areas prior to the issuance of the 'Morality law', these rules were progressively enforced in the media sector starting with September 2024.[1534](#) More information is available in section [1.2.7\(c\) The ban on images of living beings](#).

After the Taliban takeover, there was a large exodus of journalists,[1535](#) and some went into hiding.[1536](#) Many media outlets moreover closed.[1537](#) Out of the roughly 12 000 journalists that were active in Afghanistan in 2021, more than two thirds were estimated to have quit the profession after the Taliban takeover. In particular the number of active women journalists decreased significantly.[1538](#) 84 % of female journalists reportedly lost their jobs within two months of the Taliban takeover.[1539](#) Around half of Afghanistan's 4 748 journalists, of which 747 are female journalists, receive no pay or benefits, and AIJU warns that job security remains uncertain even in major media outlets.[1540](#) Reports suggest that 11 television stations and one radio station reportedly closed during 2024.[1541](#) According to IFJ, approximately 470 media outlets remain operational in Afghanistan in 2025.[1542](#)

Media workers have also been facing threats, intimidation, harassment,[1543](#) arbitrary arrests and detention by the de facto authorities.[1544](#) AFJC recorded at least 140 incidents of media freedom violations across Afghanistan during the first six months of 2025, representing an increase of approximately 56 % compared to the same period in 2024.[1545](#) Human Rights Watch reported that media restrictions in Afghanistan have led many journalists to self-censor and to concentrate their reporting on official events. In addition, journalists failing to cover such events may face reprimands, threats, or, in some instances, detention.[1546](#)

One journalist was killed within the reference period of this report as per CPJ's records.[1547](#) The journalist reportedly died in crossfire on 15 October 2025 during a battle between Afghan de facto security forces and Pakistani security forces.[1548](#)

Sources recorded cases in which journalists had been detained during 2024–2025 on allegations of various crimes, such as links to media outlets operating in exile,[1549](#) or producing content considered hostile to the de facto authorities.[1550](#) The number of arrests differs between sources, with RSF recording 17 detentions of journalists and media workers in 2025,[1551](#) while AFJC recorded at least 20 cases in the first half of the year alone.[1552](#) There were cases of journalists being arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for producing 'propaganda' against the de facto government.[1553](#) Some journalists were humiliated in videos with forced confessions, as reported by RSF.[1554](#) According to AFJC, reporting in May 2025, at least 13 journalists and media workers were being held in detention or serving prison sentences ranging from several months to multiple years.[1555](#)

As reported by Human Rights Watch, collaborating with Afghan media in exile is 'particularly dangerous' as the de facto authorities perceive them as linked to the opposition, a threat to their control, [1556](#) and as operating illegally.[1557](#) Various sources have reported on journalists being arrested on accusations of having collaborated with exile media,[1558](#) and Human Rights Watch also noted severe beatings and death threats against such individuals.[1559](#)

Female media workers have been particularly affected by restrictions,[1560](#) including prohibitions on broadcasting women's voices in some provinces,[1561](#) gender segregation at media offices,[1562](#) as well as general restrictions on women,[1563](#) including requirements for

women to cover their faces<sup>1564</sup> and to be accompanied by a *mahram*.<sup>1565</sup> Female journalists have been excluded from press conferences, and are regularly denied interviews with de facto officials.<sup>1566</sup> In 2024, the Afghanistan Journalists Support Organization (AJSO) highlights reported on 38 % of women journalists facing major barrier to accessing information due to gender discrimination.<sup>1567</sup> According to the IFJ, the number of employed female journalists has dropped from 2 833 before 2021 to only 747 in 2025, a decline of 74 %.<sup>1568</sup>

Although not specifying certain profiles, sources consulted by ACCORD reported that the de facto authorities threaten family members of individuals not complying with their rule, making it difficult for people in general to speak up.<sup>1569</sup> The Swiss Refugee Council furthermore reported on threats towards *inter alia* journalists extending to their family members, and that the issue of family members being targeted was most probably an underreported issue.<sup>1570</sup> For more information on family members of critical voices, see chapter 4.11. in the [2024 EUAA Country Focus - Afghanistan](#).

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