

Protection of Journalists/ Media Persons

The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan under Article 9 guarantees the right to freedom of expression. Moreover, as a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Pakistan is obliged to ensure protection and promotion of the rights of journalists and media professionals by adopting appropriate legislative, administrative and policy measures. Besides, the UN Concluding Observations on Pakistan's obligatory reports on human rights Conventions, particularly ICCPR as well as recommendations on Pakistan's 3rd Universal Periodic Review report also require legislative and policy measures for protection of journalists and media workers. The Ministry of Human Rights is also implementing Action Plan for Human Rights, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, which provides for specific actions including development of media policy for promotion and protection of human rights.

2. **Keeping in view the national and international commitments, the Ministry of Human Rights has prepared "*Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Bill, 2020*". The Bill proposes legal and institutional framework for conducive environment where journalists and media professionals can work with freedom of expression. The Cabinet approved the Bill and directed Ministry of Law and Justice for its finalization incorporating input of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.**

3. In addition to the above, the Government has been taking various measures to provide an enabling environment to the journalists, these include:

- The issue of journalists protection has been brought in the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Functional Committee of the Senate;
- The Federal Minister for Human Rights has strongly condemned the harassment of female journalists;
- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB) extends special treatment to the organizations/unions of journalists which work for the professional rights of journalists. These unions are represented in numerous committees/foras working under the Ministry in which their views are accorded due consideration. MoIB ensures the safety and security of these unions as it does in the cases of individual journalists and media houses. As the members and office holders of these unions are all working journalists and media workers, therefore, they are also provided with financial aid in case of any eventuality such as death and injury in the line of duty and medical expenditure to the victims/their families.
- A Ministerial Media Security Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Minister for Information and Broadcasting which was represented by four provincial Information and Home departments and welfare bodies of journalists which include Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, All Pakistan Newspaper Society, Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors and Pakistan Broadcasting Association. The mandate of the said Committee is to suggest measures for safety and security of journalists and media persons.

4. Media Persons as Human Rights Defenders take a central place in the area of human rights. They are playing a courageous role in promoting and protecting human rights despite various challenges. The Ministry of Human Rights and NCHR have already launched Policy Guidelines for the protection of Human Rights Defenders, which were formulated after thorough consultations and inclusion of all stakeholders.