

RESOLUTION ON AFGHANISTAN

2016 is the deadliest year ever for journalists and media workers in Afghanistan, with 10 killed and many more wounded.¹ The worst incident took place in January, when a bus filled with employees from TOLO TV was attacked in Kabul, leaving seven killed and at least 20 wounded – the single deadliest attack on media workers in Afghanistan’s history, according to the Afghan Journalist Safety Committee.

The situation for journalists and other intellectuals is increasingly dangerous. The Taliban leave no doubts about their intentions, as they have officially declared that they consider journalists working for two independent media houses to be legitimate military targets.² The presence of the armed group known as Islamic State (IS) in certain areas adds to the deteriorating security situation. Impunity for attacks and killings of journalists, and of other intellectuals, reigns, as no one has been brought to justice.³

Reporters Without Borders’ World Press Freedom Index 2016 ranks Afghanistan as number 120 among 180 countries monitored.⁴ Journalists and writers face harassment at the hands of central and local authorities, including warlords, the police and security services. They risk being threatened and physically mistreated while reporting on corruption, controversial political issues and violent attacks.

According to freedom of expression organisations in Afghanistan, fear of reprisals for their reporting contributes to growing self-censorship. Such a climate of terror, has led to an exodus of its journalists. Last year, according to NAI Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, at least 300 journalists went into exile, threatening the country with brain drain.

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 82nd World Congress in Ourense, Galicia (Spain), 26th September to 2nd October 2016, calls on the government of Afghanistan to:

- Take concrete measures to end the violence against journalists and bring perpetrators to justice;
- Uphold fundamental principles of human rights including the right to free expression in peace negotiations with taliban and other opponents;
- Ensure that central and local authorities, including police and intelligence services, respect the freedom of expression of journalists, writers and other intellectuals, and to take all necessary measures to ensure their safety.

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International calls on the international community to:

- Increase their support for free and independent media in Afghanistan as a fundamental way of ensuring good governance, transparency and accountability;
- Ensure that organisations working for freedom of expression in Afghanistan enjoy international recognition, support and solidarity.

¹ <http://ajsc.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/JAN-JUN2016SixMonthsReportENGLISH.pdf>

² <http://ajsc.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/6-months-report-V.2.pdf> and <https://cpj.org/2015/10/cpj-condemns-threats-by-taliban-against-afghan-med.php>

³ <https://www.hrw.org/asia/afghanistan>

⁴ <https://rsf.org/en/afghanistan>