



Top: European Union Election Observation Mission team members Georgi Mikov Dimitrov and Alfredo Nicoletti standing with President Rural Media Network Ehsan Ahmed Sehar in his office press chambers.(Staff Photo)



Bottom: European Union Election Observation Mission team members Georgi Mikov Dimitrov and Alfredo Nicoletti taking notes while talking to President RMNP on prevailing political and press freedom situation.in rural Pakistan.

European Union Election observation Mission Visits RMNP

Office

Two members European Union Election Observation Mission comprising long term observers Georgi Milkov Dimitrov and Alfredo Nicoletti visited AhmedpurEast, rural Pakistan for the monitoring of general elections process 2008.

They came to the office of The Rural Media Network Pakistan (RMNP) in Press Chambers at Katchery Road where they discussed the prevailing election situation in Bahawalpur district with its President Ehsan Ahmed Sehar.

The meeting lasted for an hour in which EU election observers put volley of questions about different political parties candidates, role of local governments and administration.

Georgi Milkov Dimitrov and Alfredo Nicoletti also enquired about press freedom situation in rural Pakistan and Freedom of Information laws. President RMNP told them after the imposition of emergency in Pakistan, Press and Publications and PEMRA ordinances have been amended.

He informed two members team that print media in Pakistan is to some extent free while private tv channels have been asked by the government not to air critical talk shows and alive coverage of important events.

Ehsan Ahmed Sehar presented the copies of Freedom of Expression newsletter Sadiq News to both observers and told them about monitoring press freedom violations and human rights abuses process conducted by Rural Media Network Pakistan.

Later on European Union Election Observers held a meeting with Retuning Officer AhmedpurEast Raja Mohammad Arshad in his office and discussed with him about polling scheme and other matters related to general elections.

WAN Congress and Editor's Forum

The four day 60th World Newspapers Congress (WAN) and 14th World Editors Forum concluded in Cape Town, South Africa on 6th June. It was attended by more than 1,600 editors, publishers and media personnel from 109 countries.

The President of the Rural Media Network Pakistan (RMNP), **Ehsan Ahmed Sehar**, was among the participants, as a guest of the World Editors Forum.

The South African President, Thabo Mbeki, opened the Congress in the International Convention Centre, Cape Town. Nine sessions of the Forum and five business sessions of the Congress were held in the Centre on the overall subject of Shaping the Future of Newspapers and Quality Journalism in the Digital Age.

Media experts from the United States, Britain, France, Europe and Africa spoke during these sessions and the Vice President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, answered participant's questions.

The Founder of The Republic of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, did not attend due to illness, but a short video in which he addressed the conference was shown at the conference dinner.



Bill Keller addressing Annual Press Freedom Roundtable

Press Freedom in Africa - the key to good governance and development

The Annual Press Freedom Roundtable was held under the auspices of the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) on 3rd June 2007 in the International Convention Centre Cape Town, South Africa.

The press freedom roundtable turned the spotlight on obstacles to the development of a viable and powerful press in Africa and the panelists -

Azubuike Ishiekwene, Executive Director Publications Punch Nigeria Limited

Kwame Karikari, Executive Director, NAFEO and Media Foundation for West Africa, Ghana

Pius Njawe, Publisher Le Messenger, Cameroon

Edtaen Ojo, Executive Director Media Rights Agenda Nigeria

Jeanette Minnie, International Freedom of Expression and Media Consultant,

Zambezi FoX, South Africa

Raymond Louw, Editor and Publisher. Southern Africa Report

Bill Keller, Executive Editor The New York Times USA

explained why press freedom remains a key to the establishment of good governance and durable economic, political, social and cultural development, prosperity and peace.

The panelists stated that if any continent needed a strong free and independent press to act as a watchdog over public institutions, it would be Africa where so many problems coincide - corruption, famine, poverty, violent conflict, disease and lack of education. Yet in country after country the press is crippled by a panoply of repressive measures, from the jailing and persecution of journalists to the widespread scourge of insult laws and criminal defamation which are used ruthlessly by governments to prevent critical appraisal of their performance and to deprive the public of information about their misdemeanours.

Panelist Bill Keller, Executive Editor, The New York Times, also highlighted his experiences and African governments' role toward freedom of press during his stay in Johannesburg as Bureau Chief of The Times.



Peter Fenilherade BBC, Ehsan Ahmed Sehar and French delegate

The President of the Rural Media Network Pakistan (RMNP) **Ehsan Ahmed Sehar** presented his report about the state of press freedom in South Asia and copies of RMNP free FOE newsletter to panelists and other editors.

The Roundtable lasted for four hours. A question and answer session was also conducted by the panelists.

More than three hundred participants representing 105 countries including Sylviee Coudray, Senior Programme Specialist UNESCO, attended the Annual Press Freedom Roundtable.

WPF seminar

Mubarakpur (Rural Pakistan) - Democracy and changes in style of governance are prerequisite for press freedom in the country, said regional politicians, journalists and academics in a seminar on 'State of Press Freedom in Pakistan' at Press Club Mubarakpur held under the auspices of The Rural Media Network Pakistan(RMNP) on Thursday.

They termed media freedom and independent judiciary essential for democratic functioning of the government.

They expressed concerns over increasing intolerance and violence, which had made journalists vulnerable with murders of six working media-men while 50 others were injured during last year in the country.

The speakers questioned quality and credibility of news and feared that news were being planted by interested parties. They raised doubts about effectiveness of perceived media freedom in the country recently, which was only restricted to expressing opinion while depiction of facts is being resisted by the rulers. They called commercial pressure as major challenge to the press freedom.

President RMNP Ehsan Ahmed Sehar said that journalism was the fourth pillar of democracy but in Pakistan journalists

were facing various pressures.

He condemned the killing of journalist Hayatullah Khan. He said that recently Sohail Qalander was kidnapped by some unidentified people for reporting against them.

He said that killings and kidnappings of journalists were increasing. "All journalists organisation are struggling for the freedom of press. The use of violence to pressure journalists is condemnable because access to truth is the fundamental right of people," he added.

President Press Club Ahmedpur East Shabbir Ahmed said that on the one hand, journalists were facing problems to bring facts to light and on the other they were exploited.

He said that the owners of newspapers should implement the Wage Board Award. He said freedom of expression was indispensable to highlight social evils. "People should help journalists in their fight against social evils," he added.

Journalists Mazhar Rasheed Missan, Rana Mohd Saleem, Mohd Ashfaq, Sheikh Mohd Akmal, Syed Fida Shah, Ms Sumera Naz Khokhar and others emphasised the need for the international community's collective efforts to ensure complete freedom of the press globally. They said that since the press plays a vital role in a state, it was imperative for governments to ensure its full freedom, adding that print and electronic media in Pakistan presently had full freedom as compared to the past.

Speakers also bitterly criticised the sanctions imposed on the press in the world, including the Indian-held Jammu & Kashmir state where media was suffering from sanctions imposed by Indian occupation forces. They said no foreign journalist from print or electronic media was allowed by the Indian occupation forces to cover the daily tragedies suffered by Kashmiris because of Indian troops. As many as 120 journalists hailing from rural areas of South Punjab attended this seminar while another 60 persons including politicians and academics were also present on this occasion. A special WPF issue of Free monthly newsletter Sadiq News was also distributed among the participants while messages of Director General UNESCO Koichiro Mastuura, CEO World Association of Newspapers (WAN) Timothy Balding, Executive Director Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA) Bryan Cantley, Communication Officer Free Voice Aik Meeuse and Founder Citizens Media Commission Pakistan Javed Jabbar were also read on this occasion.

Source: Nation 6 May 2007

World Press Freedom Day statement

On this day - World Press Freedom Day - I extend my best wishes and words of encouragement to the rural press of Pakistan on behalf of the World Association of Newspapers, which represents publishers and editors in more than 100 countries through 18,000 publications.

This year, WAN has chosen "Press Under Surveillance" as the theme of its annual World Press Freedom Day Campaign. In recent years, countries worldwide have tightened their security and surveillance measures in reply to terrorist attacks and threats. The objective of these measures is laudable and compelling - the protection of citizens against threats to life and property.

There is, however, a legitimate and growing concern that in too many instances such measures are being used to stifle debate and the free flow of information about political decisions, or that they are being implemented with too little concern for the overriding necessity to protect individual liberties and, notably, freedom of the press.

The theme of this year's WAN World Press Freedom Day Campaign is of particular concern for the Pakistani media.

In the past years, the press freedom situation in your country has continued to erode under the government of President Pervez Musharraf. Media are not allowed to report freely on subjects considered sensitive by the military. Journalists who have done so have been kidnapped and in some instances even killed. Through threats and legal harassment, the authorities have sent repeated signals to Pakistani media that there should not be any negative reporting on the judiciary, the army or the state.

On this day, I call on the government of Pakistan to allow for the media to work freely without any interference or pressure. It is of essence that the media of Pakistan enjoy total freedom in their coverage of terrorism and adjacent subjects. Press freedom is not only a prerequisite of economic and political development but it also plays a crucial role in the struggle against international terrorism.

Timothy Balding
Chief Executive Officer
World Association of Newspapers



Timothy Balding

World Press Freedom Day statement

On World Press Freedom Day 2007 the Commonwealth Journalists association would like to pay tribute to the work being done by the Rural Media Network (RMNP) for rural journalists in Pakistan.

Life, and death, is very real for journalists working in Pakistan as the numerous reports by media watch organisations from there indicate. But too seldom do such reports show the disproportionate weight being carried by rural reporters and editors.

The Rural Media Network is doing much in the Pakistan countryside to show working journalists what they can do, to teach them the skills they can use to do their work safely, and to stand up for them in public forums.

CJA also is aware of the strenuous attempts being made by RMNP and Sadiq News to publish in the local language and applauds this effort to bring the media closer to the people.

We look forward to seeing another year of close co-operation with the Rural Media Network Pakistan.

Bryan Cantley
Executive Director
Commonwealth Journalists Association



Bryan Cantley



World Press Freedom Day statement

The Committee to Protect Journalists extends its support and solidarity to the Rural Media Network Pakistan on World Press Freedom Day. We join with all of our colleagues in Pakistan - in the cities and the countryside - in calling on governments around the world to respect the rights of journalists and other media workers as they fulfill their duty of accurately and honestly reporting the news.

Bob Dietz
Asia Program Coordinator
[Committee to Protect Journalists](#)



World Press Freedom Day statement

In recent months in Pakistan, volatile conditions have developed due to the suspension of the Chief Justice of Pakistan and due to on-going threats from terrorism, religious extremism, criminal elements and power groups. The media in our country have had to face attacks on offices as well as assaults on individuals. Several journalists have paid the price of fulfilling their professional duties in dangerous areas, sacrificing their lives and, in some cases, even their family members have been killed. Many more have been injured and have been threatened with physical punishment. Even as there is unprecedented freedom of the media in Pakistan in 2007, there are also the old ghosts of the past and new demons as well.

The cause of preserving and strengthening media freedom and press freedom is a shared responsibility between all segments of society and between all citizens.

Let us renew our pledge to protect and enhance freedom of expression, freedom which is conducted with integrity, fairness and balance.

Javed Jabbar
Former Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting
Founder [Citizens Media Commission of Pakistan](#)



World Press Freedom Day statements

Free Voice

Free Voice is a Dutch foundation which supports independent media in countries in development. Free Voice is convinced of the important role of pluralistic and reliable media for the development of individuals, organizations and open societies.

- They can give people a voice, and inform the authorities of their needs and wishes.
- They can control the government, the people in power and organizations, and make public cases of corruption misuse of power and self-enrichment.
- They can give reliable and balanced information to people to form themselves balanced opinions and take well-considered decisions.

Aik Meeuse



Koichiro Matsuura

World Press Freedom Day Statements

UNESCO

UNESCO DG on WPF

World Press Freedom Day is an occasion to remind the world of the importance of protecting the fundamental human right of freedom of expression enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With violence against media professionals constituting today one of the greatest threats to freedom of expression, I have decided to dedicate World Press Freedom Day 2007 to the theme of journalist safety.

Over the past decade, we have witnessed a dramatic escalation of violence against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel. In many countries around the world, media professionals are harassed, attacked, detained and even murdered. According to professional organizations, 2006 was the bloodiest year on record with over 150 media killings. Hundreds more media workers were arrested, threatened or attacked because of their work. Being a journalist has never been more dangerous.

We know that conflict zones - and post-conflict zones - are particularly hazardous environments for journalists. The worst example is Iraq, where sixty-nine media professionals were killed last year. Over 170 media professionals, the vast majority being local journalists, have been killed in the country since the conflict began in April 2003. Never in recorded history has there been such a large-scale killing of journalists.

Those who risk their lives to provide independent and reliable information deserve our admiration, respect and support. They understand better than anyone that media contributes significantly to processes of accountability, reconstruction and reconciliation. Indeed, the growth in violence against journalist is telling, if tragic, testimony to the importance of the media to modern democracies.

The safety of journalists is an issue that affects us all. Every aggression against a journalist is an attack on our most fundamental freedoms. Press freedom and freedom of expression cannot be enjoyed without basic security.

On World Press Freedom Day, therefore, we must pledge to strengthen our efforts to secure journalist safety. In particular, I call on all governments and public authorities to end the pervasive culture of impunity that surrounds violence against journalists. Governments must fulfil their responsibility to ensure that crimes against media professionals are investigated and prosecuted.

Today is also an occasion to recognize the progress that has been made in protecting press freedom. UNESCO welcomes the recent UN resolution condemning attacks against journalists in conflict situations. This resolution represents a victory for the campaign against impunity, and for those committed to protecting the independence and rights of media workers. We must exploit this momentum to build a culture of safety within media.

As we celebrate World Press Freedom Day, let us reflect on ways to propagate values that respect the media's vital role in promoting sustainable peace, democracy and development. Let us commemorate media professionals who have lost their lives, and honour those who bring us information despite danger and risk. Above all, let us appreciate the intimate relationship between securing the safety of journalists and realizing our own freedoms. Our ability to act as informed citizens of the world depends on a media that can work freely and safely.

Koichiro Matsuura Director General



Mohd Abbas Khan Abbasi was inducted as Amir Bahawalpur in 1966 by the President of Pakistan after the death in 1966 of his father, Nawab General Sir Sadiq Mohd Khan Abbasi, the last ruler of the former princely state of Bahawalpur.

Mohd Abbas served as Punjab Governor in the Bhutto regime and was a federal minister in the Zia ul Haq government. He was father of the present Amir Nawab Salahuddin Abbasi.

Nawab Abbas died on 14th April 1988 and the twentieth anniversary of his death anniversary was observed on 14th April in Bahawalpur Division.

Website inaugurated

The Amir of Bahawalpur, Nawab Salahuddin Abbasi, inaugurated the Rural Media Network Pakistan website in a simple ceremony held in the office of the daily Newspaper Nawa-i-AhmedpurSharqia at Kutchery road, Ahmadpur East on the 28th May 2006. Using a laptop he opened the web site mounted by the Chairman of the Commonwealth Journalists Association (Australia) Mr Pieter Wessels.

The Former Chairman of the Municipal Committee (Ahmedpur East) Mian Ilyas Ayaz , ex-councillor Syed Imtiaz Hussein Bukhari, leading social and political activist Syed Akbar Maqbool Zaidi, and local journalists were present. Addressing the RMNP web site launching ceremony Nawab Salahuddin Abbasi said that the greatest development for freedom of expression was the Internet. This was one medium with the promise of making Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a reality. The right to "hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers" seemed almost within reach of a rapidly increasing proportion of humanity. The Internet also has the potential of providing global reach to Third



Nawab Salahuddin Abbasi inaugurating RMNP website

World media as publications in developing countries enter the era of electronic publishing and news dissemination through the Internet, he added. Nawab Abbasi observed that in Pakistan the greatest threats to freedom of expression occur in rural areas, where feudal and tribal lords and government functionaries can deliver brutal private punishment away from the glare of the national and international media, to any journalist who dares to report their misdeeds. The freedom of expression community was now using the potential of the Internet to promote free expression even in rural areas of developing countries. One such effort was the Commonwealth Journalists Association supported project to use Internet technology to promote the creation of a networks of freedom of expression monitors in rural areas of Pakistan. He hoped that RMNP website would highlight the social and economic issues and enhance local communities access to information. Earlier, the Convener Rural Media Network, Ehsan Ahmed Sehar, thanked the Chairman of the Commonwealth Journalists Association Australian branch, Mr Pieter Wessels, for creating the RMNP website <http://online-rmnp.tripod.com>. He said this website would update rural journalists about journalism training, resources, media laws and also expose freedom of expression violations in rural Pakistan. It would be available in both English and Urdu and play a leading role in the campaign against human rights abuses. Later participants viewed the RMNP website, postings about FOE newsletter Sadiq News, its links, home and news pages.

Sadiq News Launch 19 Dec 2005



Launch edition December 2005

Sadiq News, a bulletin that covers freedom of expression issues for rural Pakistani journalists, distributed its inaugural issue in December 2005. The Rural Media Network of Pakistan is publishing the newsletter with technical assistance from UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and the Nawa-i-Ahmedpur Sharqia newspaper. The Urdu-language newsletter includes information on press freedom violations, ethics, training, and other matters of interest to rural journalists. The information comes from the Rural Media Network, the National Press Union, and local reporters in remote areas. The newsletter will help rural journalists learn about their rights and improve their ability to network with colleagues.

to exist a whole apparatus of brute power that is well-used to getting away scot-free after it violates the same global values and freedoms at the expense of a single courageous editor or reporter who dares to report the truth. While mainstream media do cover instances of crime and human rights violations in the rural areas, sustained attention to the themes and incidents concerning freedom of expression in small towns and villages have to compete unfairly with the conventionally big stories. The publication of the Freedom of Expression newsletter Sadiq News will hopefully focus national and international attention on the themes and concerns of the subject as they relate to a part of Pakistan where over 60% of people still reside and where there remains the greatest need to develop both the media, access to media and the strengthening of freedom of expression without fear. I commend Mr. Ehsan Ahmed Sehar for his consistent contribution to the advancement of journalism and the values of balanced, truthful, independent expression.

Javed Jabbar
former Minister for Information and Media Development
founder Citizen Media Commission of Pakistan