The Impunity of Crimes Against Journalists Pakistan Report 2018 High impunity – 26 journalists killed in Pakistan in 5 years, only 16 cases went to courts, trial completed in only 6 cases, only one conviction awarded but no one punished

Pakistan Journalists Report 2018

PAKISTAN – 31 October 2018 – Of the 26 journalists murdered in Pakistan during the last five years for their journalism work, the cases of only 16 journalists went to court for trial of which prosecution and trial was concluded in six cases only and conviction handed in one case only.

This was revealed in a new research study tracking and examining the failure of the justice system in prosecuting and punishing the killers of all
journalists killed in Pakistan during May 2013 and May 18, released here on
the eve of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against
Journalists observed by the United Nations on November 2 every year.

The impunity enjoyed by the killers of journalists in Pakistan is one of the
highest in the world and the murdered journalists and their families have
received justice in only one of the 26 cases, and in this case also a
conviction was handed down by a lower court, but the accused was able to
get the sentence overturned at the high court level.

"Journalists continue to get target killed and threats against them
continue to grow and the State's legal system (police failure) and
justice system (courts failure) have failed to provide them justice," Iqbal Khattak, the Executive Director of Freedom Network said on the
occasion to urge all stakeholders of media to join hands to fight back
deep-rooted impunity for crimes against journalists and media.

"This means the killers enjoy total impunity with no fear of getting
punished for killing journalists. Journalists are dead and their killers are
free," he went on to add.

The "Impunity of Crimes Against Journalists Pakistan Report
2018" has been produced by Freedom Network, a national
independent organization that monitors attacks against journalists and
works on journalists' safety issues is titled "Crime and
Punishment in Pakistan's Journalism World: Zero Justice for
Pakistan's 26 Murdered Journalists."

The report, the first of its kind focusing on impunity of crimes against
journalists based on a special impunity index developed by Freedom
Network and by examining the FIRs of journalists and interviews with the
families, lawyers and former colleagues of the murdered journalists revealed
the following startling findings:

Zero punishment — justice failures

The level of impunity enjoyed by killers of journalists in Pakistan is
near-complete. The killer of only one of the 26 journalists murdered in the
period 2013-18 was convicted (3.5%). The only case of conviction of an
accused killer was at the district court level in KP after which he successfully
challenged the conviction at the high court level.
The report made four recommendations to successfully combat impunity of crimes against journalists in Pakistan, including Enactment of special federal and provincial laws for safety of journalists to obligate the legal system to protect journalists; Appointing special federal and provincial prosecutors on safety of journalists to improve prosecution of cases; Amending the constitutions and charters of all key representative associations of media to declare safety of journalists a mission; and Instituting safety policies and safety protocols within media houses to pre-empt and minimize threats.

Pakistan has been consistently ranked by international media watchdogs as one of the most dangerous places on the planet to practice journalism. The levels of impunity enjoyed by killers of journalists is shockingly high. Over 120 journalists have been killed since 2000 and over 2,000 have been attacked, injured, kidnapped, arrested or intimidated.

Most dangerous medium and province

Newspaper journalists (18 of 26 killed) are three times most vulnerable than TV journalists (8 killed). Punjab is the most dangerous province in Pakistan to practice journalism (8 killed) followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (7 killed). Print journalists are at most risk of being murdered if they are based in Punjab (6 killed) and KP (6 killed) and TV journalists if they are based in Sindh (4 killed) and Punjab (2 killed).

Memberships of press clubs and unions of journalists

Whether they are members of press clubs and unions of journalists or not, journalists across Pakistan are equally vulnerable to the risk of being murdered. Three out of every four journalists target killed were members of local press clubs but only one in three were members of their local union of journalists. Sindh and KP are the most dangerous regions of Pakistan for journalists who are not members of any press club while Punjab is the most dangerous region in Pakistan for a journalist if they are not members of a union of journalist.

Worst enemies of journalists

Most murderers of journalists remain faceless and unidentified. The threat sources are identified/suspected by the victims and their families in only one in every three cases of journalists murdered and worryingly include state actors, political parties and religious groups.

Deadly inaction
In three-fourth cases, the local state authorities were pre-informed by journalists of threats they were facing before being murdered. Despite this avalanche of early warning and threat reporting, the authorities failed to prevent their murders.

Incomplete investigation &ndash; police failures

In 60% of the cases the police fail to complete the investigations into the murder of a journalist to generate a final challan &ndash; or a full investigation report &ndash; to submit before a court for trial. Of the 26 journalists murdered, the cases of only 16 reached the court. One in three journalists murdered in Pakistan for their journalism work are this pre-guaranteed to NOT get justice because their case never goes to a court for trial because of the failure of the police. The performance of police in investigation of murder of journalists and producing a final challan is the worst in KP province where only one in six cases reached this stage. In Punjab the police failed to produce a final challan in one-third of the cases and in Baluchistan and Sindh in one in every five cases.

Incomplete trial &ndash; court failures

Barely a third of the cases of murdered journalists in Pakistan are declared fit for trial in a court of law and completes prosecution in the court. The process of justice for two of every three journalists murdered in Pakistan whose case even reaches the court does not even conclude. Courts in Baluchistan and Punjab are the slowest in completing trials of cases of journalists declared fit for prosecution.

Mr. Gohar Ali Khan

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