

2025 Annual Report on Media Freedom in Afghanistan

December 26, 2025



Table of Contents	Page
About this report	2
Background	3
Executive Summary	5
Methodology	6
Legal framework	7
Policies and Media Rights under the de facto authorities: Directives and Implications (2021-2025)	8
Analysis of the Media Directives Issued by the de facto authorities	11
Media Complaints and Violations Commission: Legal Framework and Operational Limitations	28
Violations of Media and Journalists’ Rights in 2025	30
Media outlets temporarily closed by the de facto authorities in 2025.....	31
Media Outlets Closed in 2025 with No Clear Reopening Timeline.....	32
The Overt and Covert Media Operations and Propaganda System of the De Facto Authorities	33
The Propaganda and Media Structures of the de facto authorities.....	34
The Hidden Propaganda Structure of the De Facto Authorities.....	38
Media Economic Situation	40
The Status of Women in the Media	41
Analysis and Review of Report Findings	43
Recommendations	44



About This Report

This annual report by the [Afghanistan Journalists Center \(AFJC\)](#) provides a rigorous and evidence-based assessment of the deteriorating media environment in Afghanistan since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021. It documents the systematic and ongoing repression, censorship, and control exercised over journalists and media outlets under Taliban rule, highlighting the severe restrictions that threaten the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

In the face of an increasingly hostile landscape, the report details the erosion of legal protections—replaced by vague, often contradictory directives rooted in an specific interpretation of Sharia law and the interests of de facto authorities. It chronicles widespread violations, including arbitrary arrests, threats, and the closure of independent media outlets, alongside the proliferation of propaganda networks aligned with regime interests.

The report pays particular attention to the plight of women journalists, who face escalating restrictions through formal bans and informal intimidation, further undermining media diversity and pluralism. Through meticulous monitoring and data collection, AFJC exposes the mechanisms—both overt and covert—used by Taliban authorities to dominate narratives, silence dissent, and manipulate information.

Moreover, the report highlights the dire economic conditions confronting Afghan media, as diminishing international aid and financial restrictions exacerbate operational crises. It underscores the profound challenges to media freedom and the urgent need for concerted action by the international community and domestic stakeholders to uphold human rights, protect journalists, and hold perpetrators accountable.

AFJC remains committed to documenting these developments, amplifying the voices of Afghan journalists, and advocating for a future where independent media can once again thrive in Afghanistan. This report aims to serve as a clarion call for renewed vigilance and collective responsibility to defend press freedom in one of the world's most dangerous environments for journalists.

AFJC, an independent and non-profit organization, has been preparing and publishing annual reports since 2014. This ongoing initiative has continued without interruption for the past twelve years.

Background

Since the fall of the republic government and the return of the Taliban to power, more than four years have elapsed. During this period, Afghanistan's media and legal environment have undergone profound and significant transformations. The rights to freedom of expression and access to information, which were guaranteed under international instruments such as the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), have gradually been replaced by stringent restrictions and tightly controlled policies implemented by the de facto authorities. These changes not only undermine fundamental human rights principles but also pose serious challenges to the future of media operations and individual freedoms within the country.

The legal frameworks and documents established during the Islamic Republic era, which were rooted in respect for basic rights and media freedoms, have been replaced by regulations based on a narrow interpretation of Sharia law and the interests of the de facto authorities. The 2004 [Afghan Constitution](#) and other legal instruments that officially recognized the right to free expression, independent media activity, and open access to information have been marginalized and supplanted by directives, restrictions, and bans that are often enforced without transparency and based on ambiguous and politicized interpretations.

As highlighted in this report, by the fourth year of Taliban de facto authorities' governance, there has been a marked intensification of restrictive and repressive policies affecting the media landscape. The prohibition of women's participation in de facto-controlled media, increasing restrictions on women's work in independent and private media outlets, bans on broadcasting music, films, and entertainment, prohibitions on covering protests and demonstrations, bans on criticizing de facto officials, restrictions on interviewing political opponents, and severe limits on political debates and live programming exemplify this trend. These measures have severely undermined the fundamental rights of media freedom and independence.

Furthermore, official and unofficial structures—including propaganda networks, and security agencies—are leveraging digital platforms and modern tools to promote one-sided, distorted narratives, suppress dissent, and silence independent media voices. The decline in international aid and financial restrictions have led to the closure and downsizing of numerous media outlets, the dismissal of staff, and a reduction in programming, further constricting the media environment. As a result, Afghanistan's media space is becoming increasingly limited and controlled, with independent journalism practically curtailed or banned.

The situation for women journalists is particularly dire. Increasing restrictions on women's presence in media outlets, the expansion of bans on women's voices into more provinces, and

discriminatory practices have significantly narrowed professional opportunities for women. These restrictions not only weaken their individual and professional rights but also negatively impact information dissemination and the capacity for society to engage in open critique and discussion.

Overall, the legal and political environment governing Afghanistan's media in 2025 has not only curtailed freedom of expression and access to information but also threatens the development and independence of the media sector. This situation raises serious concerns about the shrinking space for criticism, fundamental freedoms, and human rights within Afghan society. It underscores the urgent need for increased attention and action by domestic authorities and the international community to uphold human dignity and human rights, and to establish mechanisms that ensure the protection of fundamental freedoms and support for independent, active media in Afghanistan.

Executive Summary

The Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC) presents its 2025 Annual Report, providing a comprehensive assessment of the state of media freedom in Afghanistan under de facto authorities. Since August 2021, the Taliban has been in power, but Afghanistan—home to roughly 40 million people with a young, diverse society—has become progressively more isolated. The de facto authorities have systematically curtailed individual and social freedoms, notably by depriving women—who constitute half of the population—of access to higher education and imposing severe restrictions on women’s activities within the media sector. The de facto authorities are actively suppressing independent media, journalists, and access to information, aiming to craft a singular narrative and promote a monolithic voice.

This report highlights that in 2025, the de facto authorities’ crackdown intensified through censorship, media restrictions, threats, intimidation, arrests, and forced confessions from journalists—an unprecedented level of repression. The media landscape has become devoid of pluralism, with outlets no longer functioning independently and instead compelled to broadcast de facto-approved content or information produced by the authorities. Despite some internal disagreements within the de facto leadership in 2024 regarding media policies, the core power structure—primarily led from Kandahar—has continued and even intensified its suppression of press freedoms in 2025.

The report notes that official media regulations remain ambiguous, with laws on media operations largely unimplemented outside limited licensing and taxation procedures. Key security and religious institutions, such as the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) and the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, have assumed autonomous authority, actively targeting media outlets and journalists based on restrictive directives, often without clear legal frameworks. Journalists who defy these directives face threats, detention, or imprisonment, while media outlets that oppose government orders risk temporary or permanent closure.

In terms of violations, the AFJC’s [Afghanistan Press Freedom Tracker](#) recorded at least 205 incidents of rights violations against journalists and media outlets in 2025. These include two killings, three injuries (in attacks attributed to Pakistani military forces), and 166 threats. A significant number—34 journalists—were detained, with at least five journalists still imprisoned in Pul-e-Charkhi and Bagram prisons at year’s end. Additionally, dozens of journalists and media workers have fled the country to neighboring nations such as Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey due to the oppressive environment.

Restrictions on media coverage have expanded in 2025, with bans on filming and interviewing local officials increasing from six to 23 provinces. Consequently, over 21 regional broadcasters have shut down or transitioned into radio stations. Several media outlets, including three TV stations and two radio stations, have been closed for non-compliance with government directives

or independent reporting efforts. The economic hardship faced by media organizations has worsened as revenues from advertising, sponsored programming, and international aid have sharply declined, forcing many to reduce programming, lay off staff, or cease operations temporarily.

Compared to 2024, incidents of media rights violations have risen by approximately 13%, with 181 events recorded that year—comprising threats, closures, and arrests—highlighting an escalating environment of repression. The overall media environment in Afghanistan remains under severe strain, characterized by pervasive censorship, intimidation, and shrinking space for independent journalism, with the future of press freedom remaining highly uncertain under Taliban governance.

Methodology

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the status of media and journalist freedom in Afghanistan for the period from January to December 2025. The findings presented herein are derived from data collected by the Afghanistan Press Freedom Tracker, an initiative operating under the Advocacy Department of the Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC).

Established in 2014, the [Afghanistan Press Freedom Tracker](#) serves as the first online database dedicated to documenting violations of media freedom in the country. The data collected is made available in three languages: Persian/Dari, Pashto, and English, ensuring accessibility for a diverse audience. In compiling the data, careful consideration is given to the security and confidentiality of the media personnel, which may result in the exclusion of specific details regarding media outlets or individuals in certain cases.

The data for the Tracker is sourced from reports submitted by representatives of the AFJC across various provinces, focusing on incidents involving violations of journalists' rights and media operations. Additionally, the AFJC's Advocacy team conducts thorough monitoring of open sources, including news media and social media accounts of journalists. Information received from media professionals is verified against credible sources, including individuals and institutions knowledgeable about the reported events, prior to being recorded in the Tracker.

It is important to note that the Advocacy team at AFJC does not include events lacking verified credibility in this report. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that not all incidents of rights violations against journalists and media personnel may be reported to the AFJC. This can occur due to security concerns or due to the wishes of affected journalists to remain anonymous. To protect the privacy of individuals whose rights have been compromised, specific details of certain incidents may not be disclosed in this report.

This methodology underscores the commitment of the Afghanistan Journalists Center to uphold the principles of accuracy, reliability, and confidentiality in documenting the critical state of media freedom in Afghanistan.

Legal Framework

The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 19 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#). As a State Party to the ICCPR, Afghanistan bears the responsibility to promote, protect, and respect human rights, ensuring that all members of society, including journalists, can freely exercise their right to freedom of expression. This obligation entails creating an enabling environment where media outlets can operate safely, independently, and without undue interference, as well as holding accountable those responsible for attacks or threats against media personnel. [Afghanistan's constitution](#) and the [Law on Mass Media](#) have been drafted in accordance with Islamic principles and international legal commitments, including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ICCPR.

Freedom of expression and media freedom are constitutionally recognized under Afghanistan's 2004 Constitution. Article 34 states: "Freedom of expression shall be protected. Every Afghan has the right to express their thoughts through speech, writing, images, or other means, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. Every Afghan has the right to publish and disseminate information in accordance with the law, without prior approval from governmental authorities." On April 12, 2024, the de facto Ministry of Justice announced that laws enacted by the previous government have been [repealed](#).

Furthermore, the legal framework governing independent media and journalists in Afghanistan is outlined in the Law on Mass Media, adopted in 2009. This law was amended and revised in 2015, and it comprises 11 chapters and 55 articles. The Law on Mass Media safeguards the right to freedom of thought and expression, promotes independent and pluralistic media outlets, and guarantees access to information. Additionally, Afghanistan has a comprehensive [access to information law](#), considered among the best globally. Enacted in 2014 and amended twice in 2017 and 2019, this law provides a strong legal basis for transparency and public accountability.

Following the fall of the Republic and the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, the de facto authorities announced that a draft of amendments to media laws, with "minor modifications", had been submitted under the de facto leadership in Kandahar. [Khairullah Khairkhah](#), the former de facto Minister of Information and Culture, stated on June 24, 2024, during a press conference in Paktia Province's capital, Gardiz, that the previous Law on Mass Media "aligns with Shariah" and the "principles of the Islamic Emirate," and would soon be ratified with "minor differences," making it accessible to media outlets.

[Hayatulalh Muhajer Farahi](#), de facto Deputy of Publishing Affairs at the Ministry of Information and Culture, commented on the content of the draft media law stating: "This law emphasizes three main points: respect for Islamic values, Afghan culture, and national interests." On December 20, 2024, in response to a question from the AFJC about whether the Law on Mass Media from the previous government remains applicable until the draft amendments are ratified

by the de facto leadership, Muhajjer Farahi replied: “Yes, except for some parts, many sections of it.”

However, more than four years after the Taliban’s takeover, the final status of the amended media law and the access to information law remains uncertain in 2025. The enforcement of media laws is sporadic and largely limited to specific administrative procedures such as issuing or renewing operating licenses and tax-related matters. Overall, media outlets operate under a heavily constrained legal environment, with few laws actively enforced and most media activities either halted or severely restricted.



Policies and Media Rights under the de facto authorities: Directives and Implications (2021-2025)

Findings from this report indicate that opposition from some of the so called "moderate" de facto authorities—who had previously expressed support for a more open media environment—has become increasingly rare by 2025. Whereas such officials publicly voiced their stance against the

suppression of independent media up until 2024, by 2025, even senior officials from the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture or the de facto spokespersons have distanced themselves from their previous positions or remain silent. The de facto Ministry of Information and Culture—once the primary institution overseeing media and journalists—has gradually diminished in influence and has been marginalized within the de facto governance structure.

During a seminar held on December 18, 2024, at the Academy of Sciences in Kabul, titled “The Role of Media in Strengthening the Islamic System,” former Political Deputy of the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Shir Muhammad Abbas Stanekzai](#), highlighted the pressures facing media outlets. He stated: “Criticisms and restrictions imposed on them serve no purpose but harm. Therefore, my appeal to the government and the Islamic Emirate [Taliban government] is to strengthen our media, stand behind them, and avoid complicating their work over minor issues. Allow them to continue their fight for truth and independence in the global media landscape. This can only happen when the gap between the Islamic Emirate and the media ends.”

In the same seminar, Hayatullah Muhajer Farahi, the de facto Deputy of Publications at the Ministry of Information and Culture, remarked: “We have never adopted a confrontational stance against the media. There is a clear address for media outlets, and the Ministry of Information and Culture’s doors are open to them.”

However, over the past four years, the hardline faction within the de facto authorities has implemented a series of [media directives](#), particularly citing the August 21, 2024, publication of [the law on Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice](#), which has fostered a hostile environment for independent media and journalists. Certain de facto officials openly endorse aggressive actions against journalists, including detention, and justify such behavior.

On September 23, 2025, [Noorulhaq Anwar](#), president of the de facto Administrative Office, stated during a journalists’ gathering in Kabul that the de facto authorities need honest journalists and support them. He emphasized that journalists should reflect facts based on professional standards and avoid inciting fear or panic among the populace.

Anwar further defended the regime’s media policies, asserting: “If a journalist is imprisoned, it is their own fault; no one has been killed—they have only been punished.” He also criticized journalists and media outlets from the previous republic, accusing them of lying and spreading rumors, thereby framing their work as untrustworthy and politically biased.

Analysis of the Media Directives Issued by the de facto authorities

Since the Taliban's return to power on August 15, 2021, the de facto authorities have issued at least 24 media directives, imposing substantial restrictions on journalists and media outlets.

1. Prohibition of Women's Employment in State Media, Including National Radio and Television

In the immediate days following the fall of the Republic and the Taliban's return to power, female employees were [barred](#) from working under the de facto-controlled state media, including the National Radio and Television. An official from the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture confirmed to the AFJC that this prohibition extends to other media under the control of the de facto, including print publications and radios such as [Omid](#) and [Hurriyat](#).



2. Prohibition of Media Coverage of Demonstrations and Civil Protests

On September 8, 2021, the de facto Ministry of Interior [declared](#) that holding demonstrations "under any name or title" is prohibited. The ministry warned that any violations would be met with accountability, stating, "Responsibility for any incident will fall on the offenders." Concurrently, a verbal directive was issued to media outlets in Kabul forbidding coverage of protests and civil protests.

3. Restrictions on Access to Information, News Reporting, and Content Production

Yousuf Ahmadi, head of the de facto's [Media and Information Center](#), announced an 11-article [regulation](#) for media and journalists on September 19, 2021, which includes the following provisions:

- Topics conflicting with Islam must not be published;
- Media activities should not insult national figures;
- Respect for national and private sanctities must be maintained;
- Media and journalists must avoid distortion in news content;
- Journalistic principles should be upheld in reporting;
- Balance should be maintained in broadcasts;
- Unverified or officially unconfirmed topics should be approached with caution;
- Content that negatively impacts public opinion or damages morale should be avoided;
- Media must maintain neutrality and publish only factual information;
- The government Media Center aims to cooperate with media outlets and journalists, facilitating report preparation, with media subsequently required to coordinate detailed reports with this office;
- A standardized form has been prepared in the government media office to assist journalists and outlets in report compilation.

The first three articles of this directive are derived from the country's media law but contain definitions that are in conflict with Islamic principles.

4: Obligation of Journalists and Media Outlets to Refer to the Taliban as the Government of Afghanistan

The de facto Ministry of Information and Culture, issued a six-point directive in a letter dated September 25, 2021, signed by Zabihullah Mujahid, the de facto deputy of the Ministry of Information and Culture, to some television channels in Kabul. Five of these directives had been previously stated, but in the sixth point, it is specified that the Taliban now control all of Afghanistan, and from now on, they should not be referred to as the "Taliban group," but rather as the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan." In other words, this directive obliges the media to recognize the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan, whereas until now, the de facto has only been recognized by one country (Russia).



The Morality Police in Herat burning musical instruments. Source: Kaweshgar, June 26, 2024.

5. Ban on the Publication of Music in Media

The ban on music was first announced to the media in Kandahar on August 29, 2021—two weeks after the Taliban regained power. This prohibition is now being enforced throughout the entire country.

6- Ban on Women’s Participation in TV Dramas, Film Broadcasts, and Requiring Women to wearing Islamic hijab

On November 21, 2021, Mohammad Khalid Hanafi, the de facto Minister of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, issued a set of [eight directives](#) during a press conference in Kabul, which included the following restrictions:

- Films that go against the values of Islam and Afghan Sharia not be released;
- Domestic and foreign films that harm's social ethics and cultural should not be published;
- programs or shows that insult should not be aired;
- Shows that violate Sharia standards and human dignity should be avoided;
- Films and videos show the private parts of the body without covering should not published;
- Women on must observe Islamic hijab;
- Plays with female actors not be published.
- The publication of serials (films) that show the faces actors who play the role prophets and companions of Prophet Mohammad((PBUH) strictly prohibited.

Following this, on May 17, 2022, representatives from the de facto Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice met with media representatives in Kabul to clarify directives regarding women’s presence in media and appropriate dress codes for women at work. Under this guidance, women appearing on television are required to cover their faces.

The impact of these directives has been widespread. Most broadcasters, which previously dubbed and aired foreign serials—including Indian and Turkish dramas—to attract audiences, were compelled to cease such content. Even media outlets broadcasting content with “Islamic” themes have been instructed to halt such productions.

7. Segregation of Men and Women in Media and Ban on Female-Male Interviews

Under these new directives, media outlets are mandated to allocate specific places for female journalists, and women and men are prohibited from working together in mixed environments. Female journalists are generally barred from conducting direct interviews with men; however, in Kabul, some flexibility exists, allowing men to interview women remotely via online platforms. Outside Kabul, this restriction is enforced more strictly, and women are generally not permitted to work at media offices in many provinces. However, in a few women-only outlets or in provinces with relatively more permissive cultural norms—and where less conservative Taliban officials are present—women may conduct interviews or produce reports from home for broadcast submission.

Media outlets that defy these restrictions have faced threats or closure. For example, on July 31, 2022, the Radio and Television [Hamisha Bahar](#) in Jalalabad was shut down after organizing a mixed training session for male and female journalists.

8. Restrictions on Interviewing Opponents and Critics of the Taliban Regime

On November 22, 2021, the de facto Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice issued a directive instructing journalists to avoid interviewing critics of the Taliban government or opposition figures, and to exclude such voices from television debates. This interference was exemplified when the heads of four private television networks—[Tolo News](#), [Ariana News](#), [Shamshad](#), and [Khurshid](#)—were summoned to the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture on December 16 and 22, 2021. During these meetings, attended by de facto intelligence officials and representatives from the de facto Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, media officials were instructed to strictly follow the directives.



9. Ban on International Television Broadcasts in Afghanistan

On March 27, 2022, the de facto authorities ordered domestic television stations that aired foreign media content to cease such broadcasts. This directive resulted in the suspension of all programming from international broadcasters, including Voice of America (Persian/Dari, Pashto), BBC (Persian/Dari, Pashto, Uzbek), and Deutsche Welle. These television stations' programs were previously rebroadcast through several local outlets such as Arian, Shamshad, and Arezo.

10. Restrictions on Commercial Announcements Containing Political, Security, and Social Content

On April 26, 2022, Zabihullah Mujahid, the de facto Deputy Minister of Information and Culture [issued a letter](#) to media outlets explicitly instructing that they must refrain from publishing commercial advertisements that contain political, security, or social content without prior coordination with the Media Oversight Department of his ministry.

<p style="text-align: center;">بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم فرمان</p> <p style="text-align: center;">عاليقدر اميرالمؤمنين حفظه الله در مورد اتهامات بي جا بركارمندان و مسؤولين امارت اسلامي و جلوگيري از بي قدری نمودن آنها</p> <p style="text-align: center;">شماره: (۳۵)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">تاريخ: ۱۴۴۳/۱۲/۱۹ هـ. ق</p> <p>مطابق هدايات اسلامي، وارد نمودن اتهامات بي جا بر مسؤولين و نقد کردن دور از واقعيت شرعاً جواز ندارد. نشر ارجاف و شایعات در اسلام جا ندارد و در بين مسلمانان هم سبب نفرت و انزجار می گردد، اعتبار و باور را از بين می برد و همت ها را ضعيف می سازد.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم د اسلامي امارت پر کارکوونکو او مسولينو د بي خايه توروونو او د هغوی د بي قدری کولو د مختیوي په هکله د عاليقدر اميرالمؤمنين حفظه الله فرمان</p> <p style="text-align: center;">گڼه: (۳۵)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">نېټه: ۱۴۴۳/۱۲/۱۹ هـ. ق</p> <p>د اسلامي لارښوونو سره سم پر مسولينو باندې بي خايه توروونو لگول او له واقعيت څخه لرې نقد کول شرعاً جواز نه لري، ارجاف او شایعات خپرول په اسلام کې خای نه لري او د مسلمانانو تر منځ هم د کرکې او نفرت سبب کېږي، اعتبار او باور له منځه وړي او همتونه کمزوري کوي.</p>
--	--

AFJC

Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada prohibited the media from criticizing the de facto officials

11: Prohibition of Criticizing the Performance of de facto Authorities

Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, the Supreme Leader of the de facto, issued a decree on April 22, 2022, declared that criticizing de facto officials is considered contrary to Islamic law. The decree states: “According to Islamic guidance, making baseless accusations and criticizing officials are not permissible religiously, and individuals who disobey this order will face punishment.”

12. Prohibition on Photography and Video Interviews in Helmand Province

On February 21, 2023, the de facto Department of Information and Culture in Helmand province issued a verbal order forbidding journalists from conducting video interviews with local officials or producing visual reports of citizens in the province. Journalists were warned not to disobey this directive. This unprecedented decision was rescinded three weeks later, with authorities claiming that a misunderstanding had occurred and that no such ban existed. Despite this, official bans on photography and video interviews were reinstated in Kandahar and Helmand provinces in 2024 and were later extended to other regions.



13. Prohibition on Working with Exile Media Outlets

The de facto authorities have accused several Afghan media outlets established abroad—primarily following the fall of the Republic government and related to coverage of Afghanistan’s situation—of engaging in propaganda against them. Multiple warnings have been issued to journalists in Kabul and across provinces, urging them to refrain from collaborating with or working for exile media. Findings by AFJC indicate that many journalists detained after the fall of the republic or whose outlets were shut down and operations halted were accused of cooperating with exile broadcasters.

Initially, these warnings were communicated primarily through informal channels; however, by 2024, the ban was formally announced. On May 8, 2024, [Khubaib Ghufraan](#), spokesperson for the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture, publicly accused [Afghanistan International TV](#), based in London of “violating the privacy of citizens and legal persons, misinformation, and promoting ethnic, linguistic, and regional biases.” Ghufraan further stated that the “content” and “behavior” of the presenters on Afghanistan International TV “are contrary to Afghan and Islamic values,” and that the station “is engaged in propaganda against the de facto authorities, and in favor of opposition groups.” He urged experts, analysts, and local journalists to avoid participating in programs or collaborating with this outlet. Sources in Kabul told AFJC that this ban also extends to other [exile media outlets](#), including Amu TV and online newspapers such as Hasht-e-Subh and Etilaat Roz.

14: Prohibition on Broadcasting Women's Voices in Local Media Outlets of Helmand Province

Since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, the unofficial ban on broadcasting women's voices in some provinces. This restriction was formally communicated for the first time to provincial media outlets in Helmand. On July 23, 2023, the de facto department of Information and Culture of Helmand province, has instructed the local media to cease broadcasting women's voices. This directive explicitly prohibited any live or recorded programs featuring women.

The most recent official ban on broadcasting women's voices was announced in Kandahar Province on March 18, 2025, explicitly prohibiting the transmission of women's voices across all local media outlets in the province.

15. Prohibition on the Use of "Foreign Terms" by Media Outlets

[Mullah Khairullah Khairkhah](#), the de facto former Minister of Information and Culture, on December 9, 2023, urged media outlets in Kabul to avoid using "foreign terms" to help preserve the country's national identity. Sources in Kabul indicated that this directive mainly targets content produced in Persian/Dari, which some de facto officials view as conflicting with "national terminology." The authorities expressed particular sensitivity toward certain Persian words they consider inconsistent with this concept. Khairkhah also cited two articles from the country's Media Law, emphasizing the importance of protecting religious, moral, and social values. He instructed radio and television stations to broadcast the five daily calls to prayer (Adhan) and to observe Islamic occasions, including Ramadan, with reverence.



Mullah Shirin Akhund issued a directive prohibiting photography and filming in Kandahar

16: Ban on Photography and Filming of the de facto authorities' Meetings in Kandahar Province

On February 18, 2024, Mullah Shirin Akhund, the de facto governor of Kandahar, issued a directive prohibiting photography and filming of meetings and gatherings conducted by the de facto authorities within the province. Local officials were instructed to submit written and audio reports of their activities.

17: Ban on Girls' Phone Calls to Media Outlets

The de facto authorities in Khost province officially prohibited girls' and women's telephone contact with media outlets. On February 24, 2024, the de facto police chief of Khost issued a directive explicitly banning any telephone communication between girls and women and radio or television stations in the province.

In a formal letter addressed to media organizations, Abdul Rashid Omari stated that "some private radio stations in Khost are promoting moral corruption by broadcasting school lessons or social programs that involve many girls." The letter further emphasizes that "girls are engaging in illegal phone calls with the presenters of these programs during both official and unofficial hours, which contributes to moral decay in society and violates Islamic principles."



He warned that if local media outlets persist in facilitating such calls, their officials will be summoned and subject to legal action.



In September 2021, the Taliban shut down the Women's Affairs Ministry and replaced it with the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

18: The law on Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and New Media restrictions including a Ban on Publication of Images of living Beings

The enforcement of the [law on Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice](#) marks a new phase in the restrictions imposed on Afghan media and journalists. This legislation appears to reaffirm previous limitations while also codifying certain new restrictions that must be enforced. The de facto Ministry of Justice announced on August 21, 2024, that the law has been promulgated based on the decree issued by the de facto leader, Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada.

Article 4 of the law stipulates that it applies across all sectors. This law will be implemented in all departments, in public places, and for everyone who lives in Afghanistan.

Article 17 ambiguously states that the enforcer, or Morality Police, is duty-bound to ensure that those working for the press and news organizations observe the following virtuous rules when publishing reports: first, to publish reports that do not contradict Islamic law and religion; second, to publish reports that do not deride or humiliate Muslims; and third, to publish reports that do not contain pictures of any animate object.

Article 20 states that the duties of the enforcer regarding passenger vehicles, lorries, motorcycles, and other such vehicles include ensuring that staff and drivers of commercial vehicles observe specific rules. These rules include not playing music, not transporting any woman who is not

covered, not allowing women to sit or mingle with unrelated men, and not transporting any woman who is not in the company of an adult male who is a close relative and of sound mind.

At Article 22, the duties of the enforcer regarding individual wrongful acts include preventing wrongful acts such as the improper use of tape recorders or radios, making pictures or videos of any animate object on digital devices, and the sound of a woman's voice or any music emanating from gatherings or homes. Additionally, women not covering themselves properly and wearing neckties are also targeted.

Article 24 states that individuals committing visible wrongful acts are liable to punishment by the enforcer, who should proceed through the following steps: first, exhortation; second, reminding the person of Allah's displeasure; third, threatening and using strong words; fourth, imposing a fine; fifth, detaining the individual in a public prison for 1–24 hours; sixth, detaining for 1–3 days; and seventh, applying any other appropriate punishment not reserved for courts. The enforcer must follow these stages when promoting virtue and prohibiting vice.

AFJC findings indicate that, in each province, local committees comprising relevant officials have been established to oversee the enforcement of the law. In Kabul, a dedicated unit from the Ministry continuously meets with media representatives to emphasize the details of and enforcement measures for this law and to urge compliance.

[Result of the Campaign by the De Facto Ministry on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in 2025:](#)

a) Expansion of the Ban on Publishing Images of Living Beings to 23 Provinces

The ban on publishing images of living beings commenced on August 14, 2024, in Kandahar, with the shutdown of the [provincial branch of the national television](#) station and its conversion into a radio station. Subsequently, the restriction was extended to other provinces.. According to AFJC's [findings](#), by the end of 2025, this ban has been officially enforced in 23 out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. As a result of this campaign, provincial branches of the national television station have been either shut down or converted into radio stations in these regions. Additionally, numerous private television channels, radio stations, and print and online media outlets have faced severe restrictions under this policy.

B. Enforcement of the Ban on Publishing Images of Living Beings to 11 de facto Ministries, Agencies

The AFJC's findings indicate that in 2025, the de facto Ministry of Promoting Virtue and Prevention of Vice expanded its ban on certain government agencies and ministries. The investigation reveals that out of a total of 31 de facto ministries and agencies in Kabul, at least 11—including the Ministry of Promoting Virtue and Prevention of Vice, Higher Education, Education, Justice, Finance, Urban Development, Energy and Water, the Disaster Management

Authority, the Technical Education Department, the Supreme Court, and the Administrative Reforms and Civil Service Office—have imposed restrictions on publishing images of living beings. Officials within these ministries or agencies rarely publish news content featuring images of living beings or conduct interviews or visual discussions involving such images.



This photo was published by the de facto controlled Bakhtar News Agency from the meeting between the de facto Minister of Urban Development and representatives of Afghan refugees in Pakistan on April 20, 2025.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

د رسنيو له مسولينو او د سياسي خپرونو له چلوونکو سره ناسته

هغه شيان چې د رسنيو مسولين او د خپرونو چلونکي پرې مکلف دي.

۱ - د خبرو اترو خپروني به لايښه نه وي بلکه ثبتي به وي.

۲ - کارپوهان به د نوي ليست مطابق راغواړي، په ليست له موجودو خلکو پرته د نورو خلکو را غوښتل منع دي.

۳ - که نوي کس خپروني ته رابلل کيږي چې ليستونو کې نه وي موجود د هغه په اړه به د نشراتو د څار له رياست څخه اجازه اخلي.

۴ - د هره ورځ سهار به د هغه ورځې د سياسي بحث د خپروني موضوع او ميلمانه د نشراتو د څار له رياست سره شريک کوي، او له اجازې وروسته به بحث جوړوي.

۵ - د نظام د پاليسيو، پريکړې او قوانين ننګول او په مسولينو بې ثبوته تنقيد منع دي.

۶ - له بحث وروسته رسنيزه اداره، د ادارې مشر، د خپروني چلوونکي او اديټور مکلفيت لري چې په خپرونه کې موجود کمزوري نقاط، حساسيت پاروونکي خبرې او يا هم په اسلامي امارت او مسولينو شوي تنقيدونه او نيوکې اديت او له خپروني وباسي.

۷ - له پورته مواردو څخه د تخلف په صورت د رسني عمومي مسول، نشراتي مسول، د خپروني چلوونکي، اديټور او سياسي شنوونکي هر په خپله برخه کې متخلف ګڼل کيږي او ورسره به اصولي چلند کيږي.

AFJC

۸ - رسنيزه تخلي به په رسنيزه شکل جبران کيږي.

The de facto Ministry of Information and Culture released an eight-article directive to the media outlets in Kabul on September 21, 2024.

19: Ban on the live broadcasting of political programs.

20: Prohibition of challenging and criticizing Taliban laws and policies.

21: Prohibition on inviting unapproved individuals to media programs.

19, 20, and 21: On September 21, 2024, representatives of media outlets in Kabul were invited to the de facto [Ministry of Information and Culture](#), where they attended a [meeting](#) lasting about an hour in which they were informed of eight articles outlined in the new directives. According to the AFJC, three of these articles (1, 2, and 5) announce the new restrictions, stating that media outlets are obliged to implement them:

1. Programs (discussions) should be recorded and should not be broadcast live.
2. Experts must be invited according to the new list; inviting those whose names are not included in this list is forbidden.
3. To invite someone whose name is not on the list, permission must be obtained from the Directorate of Media Supervision (Ministry of Information and Culture).

4. Every morning, the list of programs and guests for political debates must be shared with the Directorate of Media Supervision, and action should only be taken to implement the program after receiving approval.
5. Challenging the laws, policies, and decisions of the Taliban government and criticizing Taliban officials without proof is prohibited.
6. The media manager, media outlet, program host, and editor of pre-recorded programs are obliged to remove weak points, sensitive topics, and criticisms of the “Islamic Emirate” (Taliban government) and its officials.
7. In cases of violations of the above points, the media head, publication manager, program host, editor, and political expert (guest of the program) will be considered violators and will face consequences according to the principles.
8. Media violations will be compensated in media form.

AFJC has obtained the list referenced in these directives, which includes 68 individuals. Media representatives, speaking on the condition of anonymity due to fears of retribution from the Taliban, informed AFJC that the content of the directives was communicated verbally to the media in Kabul just one day prior to this meeting, with explicit instructions to comply.

Five months after the issuance of this directive, the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture again warned Kabul-based TV stations—including Tolo News, Shamshad, One TV, and Zhwandoon—about non-compliance with the directive, especially regarding live programming. On February 9, 2025, officials from several Kabul TV stations were summoned by the Ministry and instructed to cease broadcasting political programs and debates. Two days later, some TV journalists reported to AFJC that the directive also applies to economic discussions that challenge the Taliban government, forcing private stations to comply. They were told that, if necessary, they could only communicate with Taliban government spokespersons. A journalist from a private station in Kabul stated in December 2025 that, in some cases, individuals outside the approved list have been invited to roundtables, but intelligence officials have warned that structural problems or intra-regime conflicts should not be discussed in political or economic debates. They are also prohibited from interviewing or engaging with political opponents or opposition figures. Additionally, the journalists have been warned against reporting on issues such as the UNAMA reports on security challenges in Afghanistan or UN sanctions monitoring reports on the de facto authorities. It is also prohibited to produce exclusive reports or conduct interviews with the public on topics that challenge the de facto, including bans on female higher education and restrictions on women working outside the home.

22. Obligation to Label Killed Ruling Officials as “Martyrs”

In 2024, pressure increased on media outlets to refer to the slain de facto officials and armed personnel of the de facto authority as “martyrs,” especially following the death of [Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani](#), the de facto Minister of Refugees, in blast in Kabul on December 11. Several media outlets in Kabul reported to AFJC that they faced pressure from the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture and the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI), prompting some to revise their reports and include the term “martyr” in their coverage.



The de facto authorities in Kandahar province, in a letter dated March 17, 2025, imposed new restrictions on radio stations.

23. Mandatory Use of Religious Titles for the de facto leader and Ban on Unapproved Reporting in Kandahar

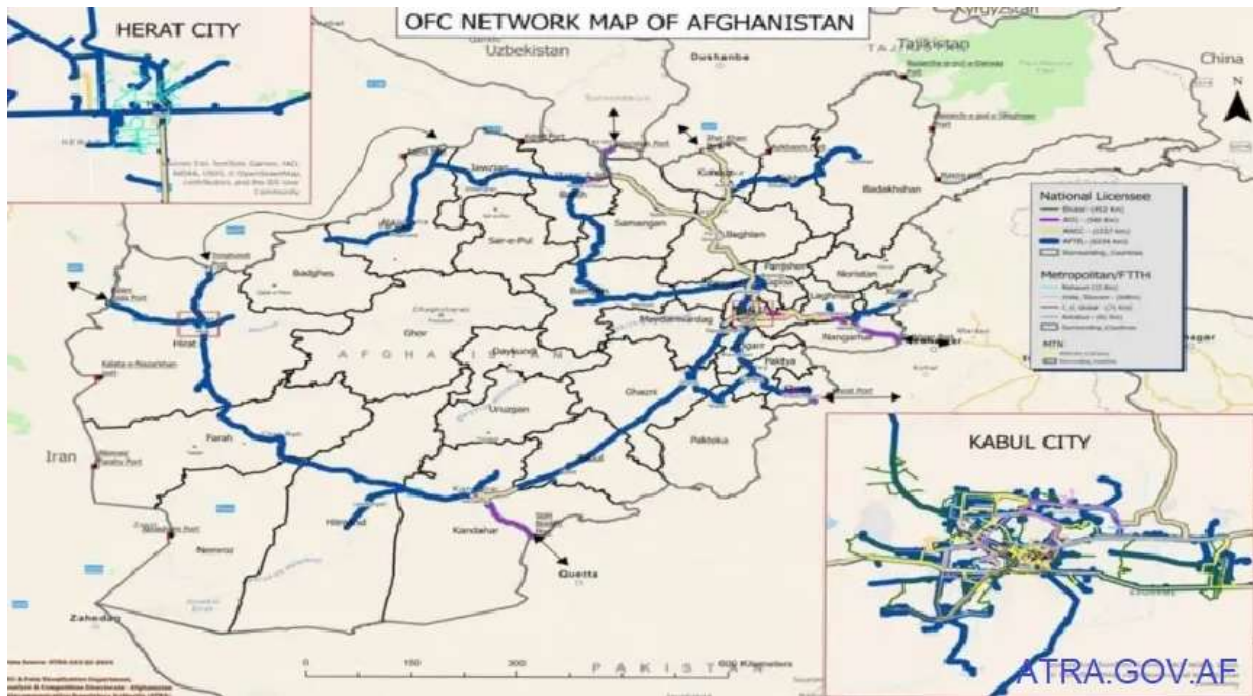
On March 17, 2025, the Kandahar Directorate of Information and Culture issued an official letter imposing new restrictions on media outlets. Titled "Essential Guidelines for Kandahar Radio Stations," the directives include four key points:

1. Radio programs and reports must exclusively use the title "His Excellency Amir al-Mu'minin, may Allah protect him" for the Taliban leader, and refer to the government as "Islamic Emirate."
2. The voices of women are strictly prohibited on radio broadcasts, and the dissemination of women's messages in entertainment programs is also forbidden.
3. Publishing advertisements for any medicines, cosmetic creams, powders, and promoting clinics or hospitals without an official license from the Public Health Directorate is banned.

4. Staff traveling within Kandahar to record reports or programs must possess official permits from the Kandahar Directorate of Information and Culture.

AFJC's finding shows that the de facto-controlled state media already adopting the terms and religious titles for the leader and other de facto authorities, however, the independent media outlets across the country are under the pressure from the local authorities to use these terms and title. Furthermore, across all provinces, obtaining official permits and prior coordination with local authorities are mandatory for reporting and interviews. Journalists must navigate red lines—though often ambiguous—set by the de facto regime regarding national interests and Islamic values.

Foreign journalists seeking to report from Afghanistan must submit their requests in advance to the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs, specifying their intended coverage topics. A local journalist with experience working alongside foreign correspondents explained that if the report focuses on topics of interest to de facto authorities—such as "security improvements" or "reconstruction"—work permits are granted. Otherwise, requests are often delayed for months, with officials claiming they are under review.

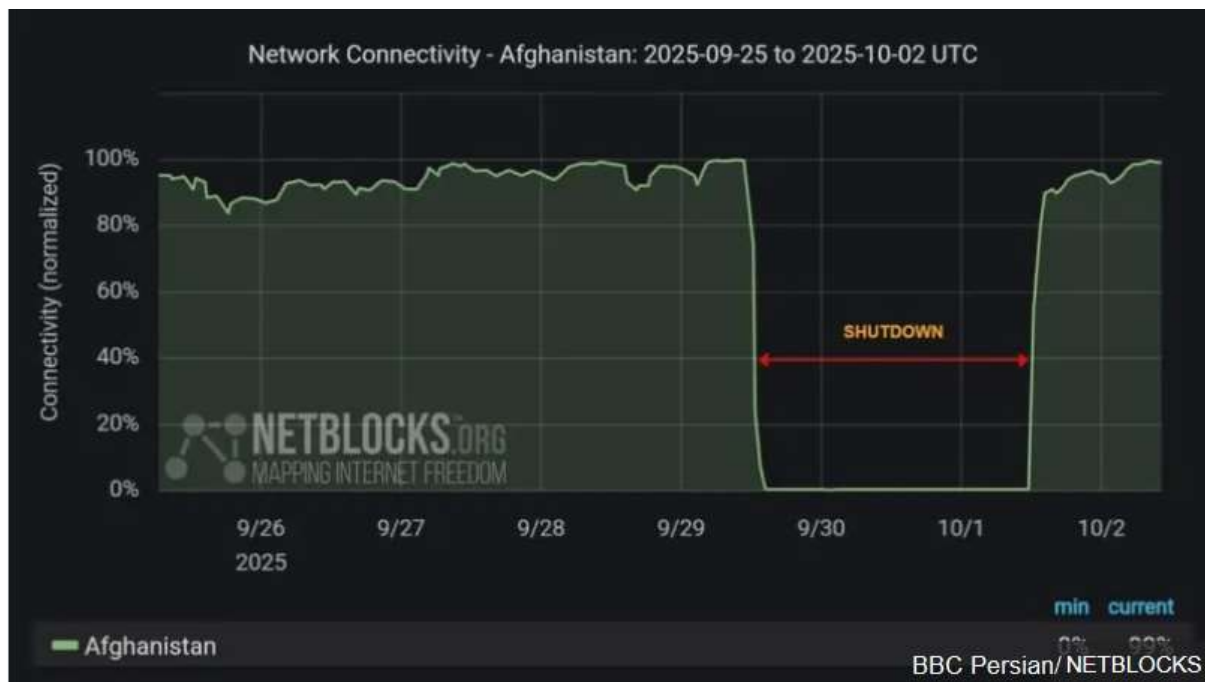


Afghanistan Fiber Optic Network

24: Nationwide internet shutdown to "prevent immoral acts"

The nationwide fiber optic internet in Afghanistan was shut down on September 29, 2025, by order of the de facto leader, Hibatullah Akhunzada. The initial outage began in Balkh Province and was subsequently extended across the entire country.

Haji Zaid, spokesperson for the de facto governor in Balkh, [announced](#) via X that the fiber optic cable had been completely cut in the province in accordance with the Taliban leader's directive, citing "prevention of immoral corruption" as the rationale. The internet remained offline for two days and was restored on October 1, returning to normal functioning. Beyond economic repercussions, the shutdown significantly restricted public access to online information and disrupted media activities within the country.



NetBlocks, an internet monitoring organization, reported that Afghanistan experienced a total internet blackout for 48 hours.

Some media outlets indicated that the [decision to shut down the internet](#) was made during a meeting in early September 2025, involving de facto provincial governors from Nangarhar, Balkh, Kandahar, and Herat, with Akhunzada present in Kandahar. Following this, Akhunzada directed the de facto Ministry of Communications to filter internet content; however, due to the ministry's limited capacity to effectively filter or restrict user access, he ordered a complete shutdown instead. The head of an independent television station in Kabul expressed concern that the de facto authorities might seek to restrict or filter internet access as soon as they obtain the necessary financial and technical resources. Such actions, he warned, would severely impact media outlets and access to information.



The meeting of the Media Complaint Commission, October 12, 2025. Source: MoIC

Media Complaints and Violations Commission: Legal Framework and Operational Limitations

The Media Complaints and Violations Resolution Commission was established based on the country media law during the republic government. It was authorized to, depending on the circumstances, issue recommendations, warnings, or refer offenders—whether media outlets or journalists—to relevant judicial authorities for prosecution. This mechanism aimed to handle media-related complaints and violations through legal procedures, thereby preventing direct interference and threats against media entities and journalists by various actors.

Following the fall of the Islamic Republic government on August 15, 2021, the Commission ceased its activities. However, it was [reactivated](#) on August 23, 2022, with a new structure. Contrary to the provisions of the Public Media Law, which stipulates that the commission should comprise 10 members, including women, it was formed with 17 male members. The composition includes the de facto Minister of Information and Culture as the Chairperson, five representatives from this ministry, representatives from the de facto Ministries of Justice, Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and General Directorate of Intelligence(GDI), a representative from the Kabul University Journalism Faculty, four representatives from journalism organizations, and three media representatives.

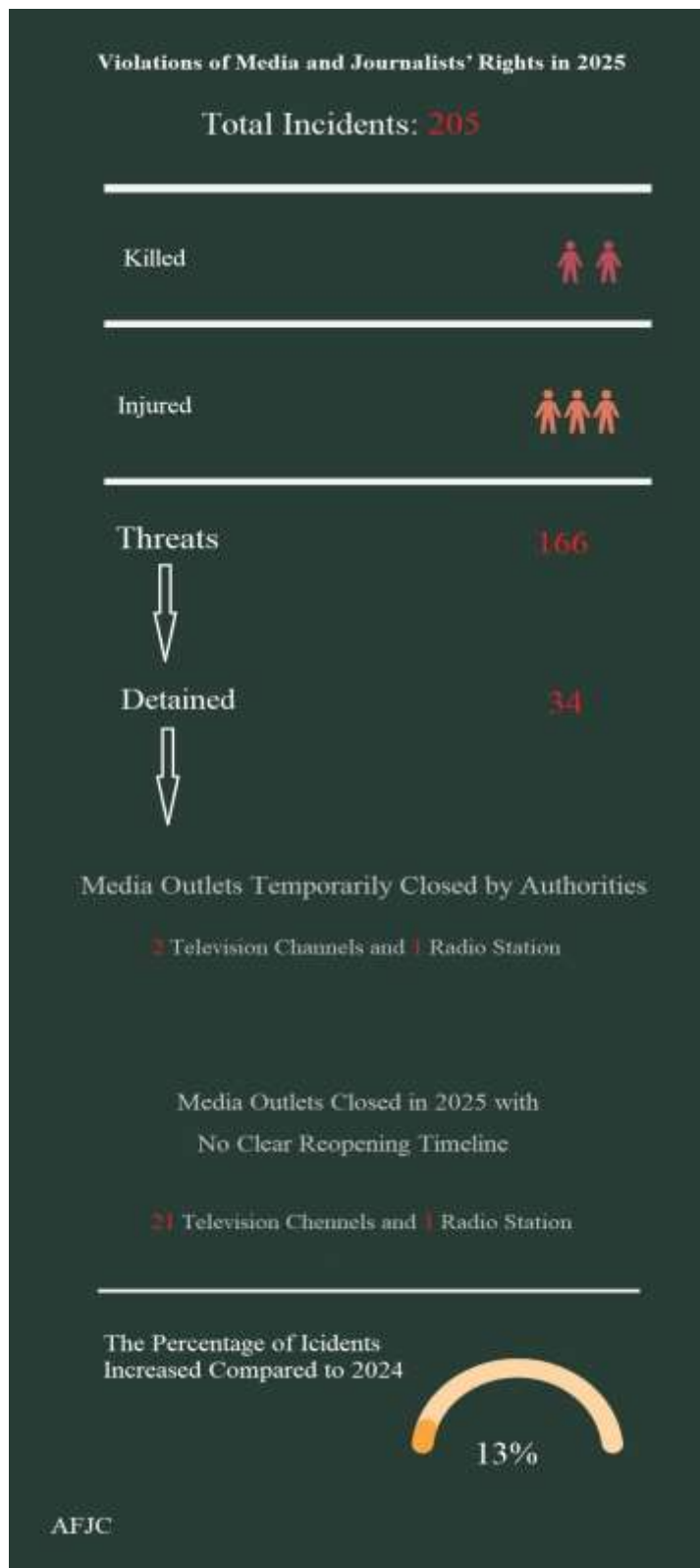
The website of the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture, which publishes news related to the Media Complaints and Violations Resolution Commission, reported that the commission held

eight sessions in 2025. Most of these sessions focused on reviewing complaints from media outlets or journalists. However, there are no reports indicating that the commission has addressed violations of media and journalist rights by governing bodies or authorities.

AFJC's findings indicate that the GDI and the morality police of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, irrespective of the legal authority of the Media Complaints and Violations Resolution Commission, have taken measures against media outlets and journalists accused of violations. These actions include issuing threats, warnings, detaining journalists, and closing media outlets.

A member of the Media Complaints and Violations Commission informed the AFJC that the commission's authority is highly limited. He explained that the de facto Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, along with the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI), operate independently and are not accountable to the commission.

Violations of Media and Journalists' Rights in 2025



Aside from the prohibition on publishing images of living beings under the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, none of the previously outlined media directives specify the consequences for journalists and media outlets that refuse to comply. However, AFJC's findings indicate that journalists who disregarded these directives faced threats, detention, or imprisonment, and media organizations encountered punitive measures such as temporary or permanent bans on their operations.

The AFJC's [Press Freedom Tracker](#) documented at least 205 rights violations against media and journalists in 2025. These incidents include two fatalities, three injuries (linked to attacks by Pakistani forces in Afghanistan), and 166 threats, of which 34 involved the detention of journalists. This marks approximately a 13% increase from 2024, when 181 violations were recorded—comprising 130 threats and 51 journalist detentions. In 2024, at least 18 incidents involved the banning or closure of media outlets.

Since August 15, 2021, through the end of 2024, AFJC has documented approximately 600 violations against media and journalists, including around 260 cases of journalist and media worker arrests.

Furthermore, access to information has

become increasingly restricted over the past year, with media outlets—particularly women-led and women journalists’ media—being marginalized even more compared to 2024.

In 2025, the ban on publishing images of living beings was expanded to include 17 additional provinces—namely Farah, Nimruz, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Jowzjan, Zabul, Parwan, Kunduz, Bamyan, Daikundi, Faryab, Panjshir, Laghman, Sar-e-Pul, Balkh, Herat, and Paktia—and was formally communicated to media outlets. Additionally, several journalists in Khost reported to the AFJC that a discussion regarding the ban on video interviews with local officials took place during a de facto provincial administrative meeting on December 22, 2025. It was decided that media representatives would be instructed to comply with this directive in accordance with the Law of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. However, as of December 25, no such meeting had yet occurred.

Based on AFJC findings, the ban on publishing images of living beings across 17 provinces (excluding Khost) in 2025 has led to the closure of at least four private media outlets, including three television stations and one radio station. Additionally, 17 provincial branches of the National Television, operated under the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture, have been shut down or converted into radio stations. Furthermore, at least 18 private television stations in Nimruz, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Jowzjan, Kunduz, Balkh, and Herat have been impacted—some have been completely shut down, while others operate in a significantly reduced capacity as semi-active outlets. Outside of announcements related to commercial or health issues, such as polio campaigns, these stations have minimal activity.

[Media outlets temporarily closed by the de facto authorities in 2025:](#)

- Rah-e Farda TV, Kabul (April 29 – June 29)
- Shamshad TV, Kabul (October 17–19)
- Nasim Radio, Bamyan (August 5 – November 25)

[Shamshad TV](#) was shut down in October 2025 on allegations of misreporting the recent conflict between the de facto security forces and the Pakistani military, as well as failing to adequately cover the de facto authorities' stance and actions against Pakistan. The station was closed by the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) but resumed operations after two days. In a subsequent statement, Shamshad TV emphasized its commitment to professional standards and national and Islamic values, and expressed its efforts to resume activities in cooperation with the de facto authorities.

[Nasim Radio](#) in Daikundi Province was shut down following the publication of a UNAMA report on Afghanistan's security situation. Local de facto authorities in Daikundi accused the station of spreading “propaganda” against them. Additionally, Nasim’s branch in Bamyan Province was closed for engaging in independent reporting and failing to adhere to de facto media policies. However, the Bamyan station was permitted to resume operations after two months.

[Rah-e-Farda TV](#) was shut down in Kabul on April 29, 2025. The de facto Ministry of Information and Culture announced the station’s closure following multiple complaints from staff regarding unpaid wages. The station was allowed to resume operations after committing to resolve the wage debt.

[Media Outlets Closed in 2025 with No Clear Reopening Timeline](#)

1. National Television – Farah (February 9)
2. Rasa TV, Kabul (February 19)
3. National Television – Nimruz (March 27)
4. Private Borna TV – Nimruz (March 27)
5. 11TV, Nimruz (March 27)
6. National Television – Badakhshan (March 27)
7. National Television – Baghlan (March 27)
8. National Television – Jowzjan (April 10)
9. National Television – Zabul (April 10)
10. National Television – Parwan (April 10)
11. National Television – Kunduz (April 16)
12. National Television – Bamyan (April 22)
13. National Television – Daikundi (April 30)
14. National Television – Faryab (April 30)
15. National Television – Panjshir (May 5)
16. National Television – Laghman (June 3)
17. National Television – Sar-e-Pul (July 20)

18. Nasim Radio, Daikundi (August 7)
19. National Television – Balkh (September 12)
20. National Television – Herat (October 19)
21. National Television – Paktia (November 23)

Apart from the provincial branches of National Television, which were shut down due to bans on broadcasting images of living beings, [Rasa TV](#) was closed after the station's manager and a reporter were detained on charges of independent reporting and propaganda against the de facto authorities. Although these journalists were released after ten months in detention, as of the publication of this report (December 25), Rasa TV has not been permitted to resume broadcasting. Similarly, [Nasim Radio](#) was shut down following the detention and one-day interrogation of three of its staff members; it remains closed and has not reopened. These employees were detained for reporting on security conditions, particularly concerning the latest United Nations reports on ISIS activities and armed opposition groups in Afghanistan.

The Overt and Covert Media Operations and Propaganda System of the De Facto Authorities

As previously outlined in the media directives section, the de facto radical faction consolidated its control over the state apparatus in 2025, expanding its influence over media policies. The so-called moderate de facto faction—those purportedly advocating for a version of media laws aligned with the Republic framework, albeit with "minor alterations"—has been sidelined. The core and hardline leadership, which holds unchallenged authority in Kandahar, strictly adheres to directives from the de facto leadership and perceives independent media as enemies that threaten their rule. This perspective guides their approach, characterized by systematic suppression and intimidation of dissenting voices.

This process is managed by the de facto General Directorate of intelligence(GDI) and the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice—two highly empowered and influential agencies—who enforce a dual strategy: intensifying restrictions on access to information and implementing rigorous censorship, coupled with threats, intimidation, and punitive measures against independent media outlets and journalists. The de facto aims to completely subordinate independent media and journalists to its authority and agenda.

In addition to this repression machinery, numerous formal and informal structures have been established to produce propaganda content aligned with the ruling administration's narrative, create one-sided stories, and promote the legitimacy of Taliban officials.

The Propaganda and Media Structures of the de facto authorities

The official propaganda apparatus operates under the auspices of the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, and the General Directorate of Intelligence(GDI). Multiple radio and television networks, along with multimedia online platforms, produce news and reports in several languages. This de facto-controlled media infrastructure disseminates content that constructs a singular, positive narrative—excluding dissenting voices—with the aim of shaping public opinion domestically and expanding reach to international audiences.

Media outlets under the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture:

- 1- [Radio and Television Afghanistan \(RTA\)](#): Headquartered in Kabul with branches across all 33 provinces, the organization broadcasts in Pashto and Persian/Dari, the country's two official languages. While the television division has been largely inactive in 23 provinces due to the ban on depicting images of living beings, the central station remains operational and has expanded in Kabul. The national radio is accessible nationwide, offering news, reports, political and social programming, and poetry, with an emphasis on de facto governance, diplomacy, and the regime's achievements. Additionally, RTA produces online content in Arabic and English.



Inauguration of Shariat Radio in Heart. Source: RTA, April 16, 2024.

- 2- [Shariat Radio](#): This media outlet, originally established during the Taliban’s first regime in the 1990s, resumed operations twenty years after the Taliban’s return to power. Its programming primarily focuses on Afghan news, achievements of the governing administration, as well as religious, cultural, poetry, and literary topics.
- 3- [Shariat Daily](#): Originally established during the first Taliban regime, this newspaper resumed publication on November 3, 2021, after a 20-year hiatus. It also maintains an online platform, with most content published in Pashto.
- 4- [Bakhtar News Agency](#): Established in 1939, employs dozens of staff members based in Kabul and maintains active branches in all 33 Afghan provinces. Over the past four years, the agency has significantly expanded its reach. Operating under the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture, Bakhtar serves as the official news source for the de facto authorities. It publishes content in nine languages—including Persian/Dari, Pashto, English, Urdu, Arabic, Uzbek, Russian, Chinese (Mandarin), and French—and maintains active presences on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube.
- 5- Additionally, the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture publishes several newspapers, including [Hewad](#) (Pashto), [Anis](#) (Persian/Dari), and [Kabul Times](#) (English), both in print and online. These outlets have been operational for decades. The de facto Ministry also produces weekly and monthly publications in every province, with some content disseminated through digital platforms.

Radio Network of the de facto Ministry of Interior:

[Police Radio](#): Established during the Republic era, this station primarily broadcasts news related to the de facto Ministry of Interior and de facto police. It maintains active presences on social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube.

Radio Network of the de facto Ministry of Defense:

[Omid Radio](#): Founded during the Republic era, this station is operated by the de facto Ministry of Defense. Omid also maintains a news website in Persian/Dari, Pashto, and English, covering stories that showcase the achievements of the de facto authorities. It produces multimedia content and is active on social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube.

- 1- [Media Outlets Affiliated with the General Directorate of Intelligence \(GDI\)](#)
- 2- [Hurriyat Radio](#): Although not officially confirmed, this station was reportedly launched in 2022 by the GDI, focusing on domestic and regional security news, as well as achievements of the de facto authorities. Hurriyat produces multimedia content in Pashto, Persian/Dari, Arabic, and English, and maintains active social media profiles on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube.
- 3- [Misaq](#): This YouTube and X (formerly Twitter) channel produces documentary-style narratives and podcasts in Pashto and English. Recently, it has concentrated on security developments in Afghanistan and issues related to Pakistan.
- 4- [Hindukush](#): This outlet, which is also active on social media platforms including X (formerly Twitter), Telegram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, published forced confessions in 2025 from a number of detained journalists and media activists who have been detained by GDI. Over the past 12 months, four [forced confessions](#) have been released through Hindukush or other affiliated accounts. The confessions are including those of [Shakib Ahmad Nazari](#), a journalist for NTV Japan; [Abuzar Sarrem Sar-e-Puli](#), the director of Towana News Agency; [Nawid Asghari](#), the director of the advertising and media content production company Pixel; and [Mahdi Ansary](#), a reporter for the Afghan News Agency (AFKA).
- 5- [Al-Mirsaad](#): This news and analysis website focuses on defending the policies and structure of the de facto authorities, with particular emphasis on jihadi groups and ISIS. Recently, it has paid close attention to Pakistan's role and policies in the region. Al-Mirsaad produces media content in nine languages—including Pashto, Persian/Dari, English, Turkish, Uzbek, Russian, Bengali, Urdu, and Maldivian—and maintains active social media profiles.

- 6- Urooj: This outlet, active on social media including X, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, publishes positive news and reports on the improving situation in Afghanistan in both Pashto and Persian.
- 7- [Maihan](#) and [Yad](#) YouTube channels: These channels which operate in the field of reflecting news and positive events in the Persian/Dari language and promoting the policies of the de facto authorities, also publish media content related to security and political topics of interest to the de facto authorities. Additionally, they engage in creating one-sided narratives and discrediting opposing news sources.



Media activities of the de facto Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice

Over the past year, the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has intensified its efforts under what it describes as media reform programs. On May 4, 2025, Saiful-Islam Khaibar, spokesperson for the de facto Ministry, stated on the de facto-controlled National Television that the ministry had held more than 1,000 "coordination and cooperation meetings" with journalists and media outlets nationwide in the past 12 months.

In a public address on August 20, 2024, the de facto Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice announced that 90% of Afghanistan's audio, visual, and print media content has been "reformed" in accordance with the ministry's directives.

Media Activities Managed by the Office of the de facto's Spokesperson

[Al-Emarah](#) News and Analysis Website: Established before the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, this online platform was initially affiliated with the Taliban's cultural section. It is now managed by Zabiullah Mujahid's office. The outlet publishes content in Pashto, Persian/Dari, English, and Arabic, focusing on official de facto positions. Additionally, other outlets such as [Thrak](#) and Mujahideen produce propaganda materials and narratives supporting the regime, primarily in Pashto. Some of these outlets also distribute promotional materials and leaflets during special events for public dissemination.

Other de facto agencies and affiliated media activities:

Almost all de facto ministries and departments maintain press offices and designated spokespersons. These entities typically issue official reports, conduct interviews with media representatives, and release statements through their websites, social media channels, and messaging apps like WhatsApp. However, such communications rarely allow journalists to ask in-depth or challenging questions; these inquiries often go unanswered or are dismissed. At the provincial level, a similar pattern emerges, with local information departments broadcasting activities, while the GDI and the Virtue and Vice departments exercise direct and continuous oversight over media and journalists. No news or reports are published without prior approval or coordination with these authorities.

The Hidden Propaganda Structure of the De Facto Authorities

Although, alongside the public media apparatus or affiliates, a clandestine, multi-layered, and complex network of unofficial propaganda and disinformation operates primarily in digital space. Managed by influential Taliban entities, offices, and officials, this network includes:

1. The GDI network of media activists

The General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) oversees a network of media supporters primarily active on WhatsApp, organized into provincial groups of five to ten members recruited from local de facto employees, youth, and pro-regime media advocates. These members receive stipends to cover internet costs and monthly allowances. The groups collaborate to coordinate the dissemination of intelligence-produced content, hashtags, and propaganda messaging across online platforms.

2. Provincial Underground activists

In addition to media activists, provincial officials maintain Underground activists of roughly twenty fighters responsible for creating WhatsApp groups and fake social media accounts. They distribute media materials provided to them and promote designated hashtags, earning monthly stipends of up to 10,000 Afghanis (USD 150) and internet allowances of 500–800 Afghanis.

3. Covert campaign by the de facto Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice

While enforcing bans on publishing images of living beings, the de facto Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice also produces and disseminates visual propaganda through trusted online activists and popular figures aligned with the regime.

4. Activists affiliated with the Offices of the de facto Prime Minister and spokesperson:

These individuals disseminate official statements and accomplishments of the de facto authorities through social media and other platforms.

5. Jalal Foundation:

Jalal Foundation serves as the cultural and propaganda wing of the Haqqani Network within the Taliban, primarily focused on boosting the prominence of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the de facto Interior Minister. It recruits cultural figures, civil society activists, and media-savvy individuals to create documentaries, multimedia content, and promotional materials.

6. Media activists involved in promoting the de facto authorities:

These individuals, as experts or political analysts, participate in media roundtables, events, and meetings, or operate online to shape public opinion favorably toward regime officials.

Media Economic Situation

Following the fall of the Republic government, approximately half of about 400 media outlets [ceased](#) operations due to various reasons, including the suspension of international aid and restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities over independent media. Over the past four years, a significant number of experienced media professionals have also emigrated from the country, and this trend continues. In 2025, the media sector faced severe revenue declines primarily due to escalating restrictions, notably the ongoing ban on broadcasting films, series, entertainment programs, and audience-pleasing plays, along with a reduction in funded advertisements from international organizations.

According to assessments by AFJC, this situation has compelled larger media organizations to lay off numerous staff members due to economic hardships. For example, in Kabul, the Moby Media Group, comprising Tolo TV, Lamr TV, Tolo News, Arman Radio, Arkuzia Radio, Barbud Music Studio, and Kaboora Production, [dismissed dozens of employees](#) in early March 2025. A source from the AFJC reported that at least 50 employees, including many provincial correspondents of Tolo News, were laid off.

An insider from Moby Media Group indicated that, due to financial constraints, pressure on remaining staff—particularly reporters—has increased. Reporters are often required to handle filming and reporting duties simultaneously, and their working hours have extended significantly without receiving additional compensation.

The economic situation in regional media outlets is reported to be even more dire. A private radio owner in one of the northern provinces mentioned that most radios operate with reduced staff and limited programming during certain hours. They resume full activity only when receiving advertisements and funding from international agencies, such as vaccination campaigns for children.

Reduced [American aid](#) to international organizations in Afghanistan is identified as a primary factor contributing to this decline. A media official in an eastern province expressed concern that diminished international assistance has led to a decrease in funded advertisements and programs, severely impacting local media operations. He noted that the financial capacity of his media outlet has declined to the point where it cannot afford annual taxes or license renewal fees.

For instance, on August 5, 2024, the Telecommunications Department of the de facto Ministry of Communications (ATRA) [suspended](#) the frequency licenses of 17 local media outlets in Nangarhar province due to unpaid debts. In Nangarhar, classified as a first-tier province, a local radio or television station must pay an annual license renewal fee of 108,000 Afghanis (USD 1600) and an additional \$25 in miscellaneous charges. Although this fee is lower in second- and third-tier provinces, many local media outlets are heavily indebted, with debts ranging from one year to over ten years.

The reduction of international aid in 2025 has also severely impacted Afghan exile media, which primarily produce and broadcast programs for Afghanistan from Europe and North America. This financial strain has compelled these media outlets to implement stringent austerity measures.



Tolo News Studio, Kabul. Source: Tolo News

The Status of Women in the Media

As previously explained, the de facto authorities have issued 24 media directives over the past four years, all of which apply to media organizations and journalists. However, five of these directives are specifically targeted at women. These directives include restrictions on women's employment within de facto-controlled media outlets, such as Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA); bans on women's participation in television dramas; limitations on women's presence and appearance in media offices; prohibitions on women being interviewed by men or women interviewing men; and bans on broadcasting women's voices or allowing women to contact media outlets in certain provinces.

In addition to the general instructions applicable to all media workers, women in media face additional limitations imposed on Afghan women, which further restrict their freedom of movement and expression and, consequently, their participation in the workplace. This includes adherence to the [hijab decree](#), which mandates that women wear a burqa (chadari) or a black hijab with a face covering. This dress code is also enforced for women appearing on television programs.

The new [Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice](#) imposes specific restrictions on women, including the requirement for full hijab, which entails complete covering of the body, head, and face, as well as the necessity of having a [Mahram](#) (male guardian) for long-distance travel. Since the law's enactment, drivers have been unable to offer services to women without a male guardian, making it increasingly difficult for women to travel independently. According to the hijab decree, women must wear a burqa or a black hijab with a face covering; this dress code also applies to those appearing on television.

Women are required to be accompanied by a Mahram for travel exceeding 78 km, effectively barring female journalists from engaging in fieldwork.

However, AFJC's finding in 2025 indicates that restrictions on female journalists and discriminatory behaviors against them have intensified this year, even manifesting at official events attended by senior de facto officials.

For example, a female journalist employed by a private television station in Kabul reported that in November, she visited the de facto Media and Information Center to cover a press conference held by a senior official, but she was denied entry.

A female journalist from a private TV station reported that she was assigned by her station's management to cover a press briefing held by a European official at the European Union Delegation in Kabul. However, security personnel from the de facto authorities denied her entry.

In another incident, the voices of female journalists covering a press conference by [Amir Khan Muttaqi](#), the de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs, held on July 23, 2025, at the Government Media and Information Center in Kabul, were censored. The event was broadcast live on national television; when two female journalists posed questions to Muttaqi, their voices were cut off from the broadcast. After their questions, the live transmission continued without further interruption.

According to the Law on Promoting Virtue and Preventing Vice, the voices of women are considered private and should not be heard outside the home.

There are indications that women journalists in the provinces face greater restrictions in accessing information, and permission to attend press conferences or major events is often not

granted. Additionally, there are obstacles and barriers related to the renewal of women's media licenses and their work permits for field reporting.

For example, a female journalist in one of the western provinces reported that, despite having a male guardian (mahram), she was detained on the pretext that she had undertaken reporting without prior permission from local de facto authorities. She was held in detention for two days and subjected to interrogation.

In April 2025, the local de facto authorities of Badakhshan province declared that the operation of women's radio stations, Banowan and Harim Zan—two radio stations dedicated to women—was against Law on Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. A decision was made to shut down these media outlets, but for unspecified reasons, this threat was not enforced.

Analysis and Review of Report Findings

In the period following the fall of the republic government and the return of the Taliban, the legal and political environment governing the media in Afghanistan has changed dramatically. According to the report's findings, the rights to freedom of expression and access to information—guaranteed by international documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—have been severely restricted under the Taliban government. The 2004 Republic Constitution and the Media Law, which supported principles of media freedom and the right to information have effectively been replaced by new regulations and strict directives based on a particular interpretation of Sharia law and values, for which clear and precise definitions have not been provided.

Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, their media policies and directives have become increasingly restrictive. These include bans on women's employment in de facto controlled media outlets, prohibitions on broadcasting music, restrictions on coverage of protests, tighter controls over women's participation in private media, strict oversight of political interviews and debates, and bans on live broadcasts and critical analyses. Such measures pose serious threats to fundamental media freedoms. In practice, these directives have been used as tools of repression, leading to threats, closures of media outlets, and violations of journalists' rights. For instance, in 2025, more than 200 incidents of media and journalist rights violations were documented, including dozens of arrests, threats, and the shutdown of multiple media organizations.

Alongside official structures, informal networks, propaganda channels, and controlled advertising operated by security and propaganda agencies of the de facto authorities play a major role in suppressing independent narratives and reinforcing the regime's propaganda. By leveraging cyberspace, media supporters of the de facto, and cultural and advertising institutions,

these networks strive to promote one-sided, positive narratives about the de facto performance while silencing opponents and independent media outlets.

Furthermore, reductions in international aid and financial restrictions have led to the closure of several media outlets, a decrease in production programs, and mass dismissals of staff. As a result, media freedom has declined, and active outlets are confined to producing controlled, propaganda-oriented content in favor of the Taliban regime.

Additionally, restrictive policies regarding women's participation in media and discriminatory treatment toward female journalists indicate an increasing trend of suppression and gender-based restrictions. Limitations such as bans on airing women's voices, prohibitions on telephone communication with media outlets in many provinces, and censorship of women's voices during live news events have severely constrained women's working environments.

Overall, the de facto authorities' directives, lacking a coherent legal system and media policy, are based on further restrictions of fundamental freedoms and full control over media narratives. These policies, by gradually eliminating independent media, repressing journalists, and establishing propaganda and promotional structures, have created a tense and restrictive environment for media activities, posing serious challenges to the future of freedom of expression in Afghanistan. This situation has raised serious concerns about the shrinking space for critical and free information, as well as the protection of human rights in Afghan society.

Recommendations

To the authorities of the de facto:

- The media directives issued parallel to the Media Law and Access to Information Law, which have severely restricted media freedom and journalists' rights, should be revoked;
- Restrictions and discriminatory measures against women working in the media, which negatively impact their professional work and continue to hinder journalists' freedom to reflect the opinions and conditions of women and children, should be lifted;
- The undue interference by irresponsible entities, notably the de facto General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) and the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, in media affairs should cease;
- The threats against media outlets and journalists, as well as the detention of media practitioners, must end immediately; all detained journalists should be released unconditionally and without delay;

- Necessary and specific measures should be implemented to ensure the immunity and safety of journalists and media personnel;
- Any review of media laws, including the Media Law and Access to Information Law, should be conducted in accordance with international standards and in consultation with independent media and experts;
- Members of the Media Complaints and Violations Commission should be selected based on professional and legal criteria, without any gender discrimination, and the commission should be empowered with the authority granted by the Media Law;
- The independent structure of the Independent Access to Information Commission should be restored to ensure its capacity to perform its professional and legal responsibilities effectively;
- Targeted awareness programs should be organized for de facto authorities and spokespersons of governing institutions on the importance of free media, journalists' rights, and access to information;
- Considering the serious economic challenges faced by media outlets, tax debts owed by media organizations should be forgiven or, at minimum, paid in extended installments;
- Fees for renewing multiple media licenses, especially frequency licenses and electricity rates, should be adjusted in proportion to the income of media outlets;
- Obstacles and obstructions to establishing new media outlets or renewing existing licenses—particularly for women's media—should be eliminated, and related requests should be processed in accordance with the law;

[To the international community and international organizations:](#)

- Financial and technical support should be provided to independent and free media outlets that have become vulnerable due to increasing restrictions and economic hardships, ensuring their independence is maintained;
- Capacity-building programs for journalists and media staff should be supported;
- Support should be extended to women working in the media sector in Afghanistan, especially through capacity enhancement initiatives;
- The process of legal redress to protect the rights and freedoms of media and journalists should be strengthened with the authorities of the governing body;

- Collaborations should be fostered with journalists who face threats due to their work or are in distress in neighboring countries and the region;
- Support should be provided to independent and free media outlets operating outside the country that continue to serve Afghanistan.

End