

4.2. Journalists and other media workers

COMMON ANALYSIS
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A journalist is a professional who is involved in the process of gathering, assessing, creating, and broadcasting news and information in newspapers, magazines, on the internet, on the radio, or television. Other media workers include a wide range of roles such as producers, directors, technicians, and many others who are involved in the creation and dissemination of media content.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: COI Update 2026, 1.; Country Focus 2026, 3.1.9., 6.1.7.; Country Focus 2024, 4.2.4., 5.4., 6., 6.4.3.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

While press freedom is constitutionally protected in Pakistan, the breadth of permissible restrictions and the post-January 2025 Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) amendments substantially expand the authorities' capacity to police online and offline expression. In 2025, Pakistan fell six places, from 152nd in 2024 to 158th according to World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which journalists and other media workers could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, journalists and other media workers have been subjected to serious human rights violations by both state actors and non-state actors such as extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, physical violence, abductions, as well as arbitrary arrests and unfounded charges. Some journalists have been sentenced to life imprisonment by the anti-terrorism court, with some individuals being convicted *in absentia*.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that journalists and other media workers could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered. More specifically, they have been facing police searches, assaults, intimidation, harassment (including online harassment), censorship, financial pressure, exile and travel bans. Regulatory control is used to manage content more broadly and discipline critical voices.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

Journalists who engage in critical reporting on the army activities (including military operations, corruption cases, management of economic activities, etc.) are particularly targeted. Therefore, **for journalists and other media workers (seen as) critical to the Pakistan armed forces, well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated**.

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for **other journalists and media workers** to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Topics they report on:** those journalists and other media workers critically reporting on state institutions other than the army, those reporting on human rights abuses, and those reporting on ongoing protests (for example protests in Pakistan-administered Kashmir) face a higher risk than those reporting on topics perceived as noncritical by the authorities.

- **Geographical area of activities:** journalists and other media workers face a higher risk in conflict-affected areas, such as parts of KP and Balochistan, because of extremist groups' operations and Pakistani authorities' engagement in mass-surveillance.

- **Visibility:** the reach of the journalists or other media worker both on social media and in person is a critical factor impacting the risk of persecution. Due to their activities, some media workers are more visible than others and thus exposed to a higher risk. For example, a cameraman is more visible than a person working in post-production.

- **Being known to the authorities:** previous threats, harassment, surveillance, summons, FIRs, PECA-related proceedings, arrests, travel bans, or other measures increase the risk.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion**, as, for instance, reporting on topics that are critical to the authorities is viewed as the expression of a political stance.

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