

HRD+ Statement

on the Imposition of Additional Restrictions on the Media and Freedom

September 26, 2024

The de facto administration in Kabul has issued a decree in the name of the Office of the Prime Minister, [imposing further restrictions](#) on media freedom, freedom of expression, and access to information. According to this decree, media outlets are instructed to avoid discussing “controversial and contentious” topics. Moreover, a list of Taliban-affiliated analysts and their ideological supporters has been sent to media outlets, mandating that only they be used in discussions. Additionally, media organizations have been directed to refrain from broadcasting live programs.

These actions not only violate human rights but also endanger the lives and security of journalists and media workers, severely limiting public access to accurate information. Specifically, these restrictions affect civil society, closing off an already restricted civic space, and preventing individuals from engaging in social and cultural activities, which ultimately undermines civil rights and freedoms.

Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+), closely monitoring the human rights situation, expresses its deep concern regarding the state of freedom of expression and the right to access information in the country. The Taliban's actions blatantly violate the most fundamental human rights of Afghan citizens and are contrary to all international principles, values, and Afghanistan's commitments to the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international human rights conventions.

HRD+ strongly urges the international community and specialized organizations working in the fields of media freedom and access to information to intervene immediately and apply greater pressure on the de facto administration.

HRD+ specifically calls on the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan not only to extensively document these violations but to take swift action and submit special reports to the United Nations Human Rights Council. We expect these rapporteurs to address the following issues with particular emphasis on the systematic human rights violations in Afghanistan:

1. We urge the special rapporteurs to gather relevant documentation and evidence of these violations, convene urgent sessions within the UN Human Rights Council, and call on the international community for immediate action.

2. The special rapporteurs should issue clear and public statements regarding the grave situation of freedom of expression, assembly, and access to information in Afghanistan, urging governments and international bodies to take concrete and urgent measures to address these violations.
3. The rapporteurs must specifically call for the immediate protection of journalists and human rights activists, as they are directly under threat and pressure.

Additionally, we urge Richard Bennett, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, to recommend to the UN Human Rights Council the formation of an independent investigative body to examine the escalating human rights violations in Afghanistan, particularly concerning freedom of expression, access to information, and the security of human rights defenders and journalists. We call for the results of this investigation to be made public and transparent in order to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

We also request CIVICUS, an organization dedicated to defending civil rights and social freedoms, to thoroughly and comprehensively examine the situation in Afghanistan and produce an independent report on the violations of civil and political rights, particularly the rights of human rights defenders and journalists. This report should be presented to international institutions and human rights organizations to expose the dire situation in Afghanistan and prompt further actions to stop this decline.

HRD+ sincerely calls on international media outlets to stand in solidarity with Afghan media and journalists by broadcasting specialized and advocacy programs to raise global awareness of the dire state of civil and political freedoms in Afghanistan.

HRD+ urges all civil society organizations, experts, and intellectuals in the country to unite in defending of the rights of media and journalists during this critical time.

We also request the International Criminal Court (ICC) to take more serious action in consolidating the case of crimes against humanity occurring in Afghanistan and to consider other human rights violations, including media freedom, freedom of expression, and access to information, as underlying factors contributing to these crimes.

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