



Mr Gopal Baglay  
High Commissioner  
High Commission of India  
3-5 Moonah Pl  
Yarralumla ACT 2600, Australia  
By email: hco.canberra@mea.gov.in

19 June 2024

Your Excellency

We are writing to you to express our disappointment at the treatment of Avani Dias, the South Asia Correspondent for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Media freedom is a fundamental tenet of democracy and we are disturbed to learn that Ms Dias faced a number of challenges in trying to cover the recent national elections in India, including a delay in extending her visa which eventually meant she had to leave the country before the elections were held. She has also faced considerable abuse for doing her job.

Prior to having her visa extension refused, the Indian government issued an order to prevent social media in India from sharing a story about the Sikh separatist movement that Ms Dias had produced for the ABC's Foreign Correspondent program.

As the leading representative for Australian journalists - representing more than 5000 media workers in Australia - we support workers being able to do their jobs without fear or favour. Worker safety is paramount.

The ABC is the only Australian media with an India bureau, which has been in existence for many decades.

This bureau has provided crucial coverage of India and the broader region for an Australian audience and the Indian diaspora. Its role is weakened by these developments.

MEAA is concerned at the overall crackdown on independent foreign media in India in recent years.

India is the world's biggest democracy, but that title is meaningless if there is not respect for the critical role journalism plays in a functioning democracy by ensuring accountability from governments and those in positions of power.

India was ranked 159th out of 180 nations in the 2024 global press freedom report by Reporters Without Borders which highlighted concerns about violence against journalists, highly concentrated media ownership, and political alignment.

We are aware that experienced, long-serving foreign correspondents have had their visas or residency revoked; that other news organisations were also refused passes to cover the election; and that the BBC's bureaux have been raided by authorities following stories that were critical of the Modi government.

On Tuesday, June 18, the elected delegates of MEAA's National Media Section committee passed the following motion:

*This meeting of the National Media Section committee supports Avani Dias and condemns the way she has been treated. Media workers must be able to work without fear and favour.*

*We condemn the actions of the Indian government in its treatment of Avani and other journalists.*

*We call on the Australian Government to affirm its commitment to media freedom around the world, particularly when an Australian reporter has been prevented from doing their job.*

We ask that you provide a full explanation about the treatment of Avani Dias and convey our concerns to your government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Percy', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Karen Percy**  
**MEAA Media President**  
**Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance**