

16 August 2021

Senator the Hon Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs; Minister for Women
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Hon Alex Hawke MP
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Cc: Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Opposition spokesperson for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: foreign.minister@dfat.gov.au; alex.hawke.mp@aph.gov.au
Cc: senator.wong@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator the Hon Marise Payne and Hon Alex Hawke MP,

Re: Request for urgent support for Afghan media workers

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) write to request support from the Australian Government for media workers in Afghanistan.

The lives of people in Afghanistan and in particular, independent Afghan media workers - especially women media workers - are now at risk, and these journalists and media workers urgently need evacuation and international protection.

The IFJ and MEAA call on the Australian Government to prioritise the provision of visas and guarantee safe passage for Afghan media workers (along with their immediate family members) who the Taliban will almost certainly target for violent retribution because of their work for the nascent free press in Afghanistan - a free press that will now be ruthlessly extinguished.

In recent weeks the Taliban have seized media outlets which have been forced to close or carry Taliban propaganda. Over 1,200 journalists and media workers have already lost their jobs, with many more under threat. On August 11, 10 media outlets were forced to close when the Taliban took control of Baghlan province.

Everywhere across the country, journalists are facing threats and intimidation because of their work. Women media workers are particularly targeted. Hundreds of women media workers have been forced to flee, banned from working or even subjected to targeted murderous attacks in recent months.

All media professionals covering the situation in Afghanistan are currently risking their lives. At least 30 media workers have already been killed, wounded or tortured in Afghanistan since the beginning of 2021.

The IFJ is working urgently with its affiliates, the Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA) and Afghanistan's National Journalists Union (ANJU), to provide emergency support to help journalists take protective measures and seek safety. IFJ affiliates are also lobbying governments in a number of countries to provide emergency visas and logistical support to enable those most at threat to leave the country. Those in neighbouring countries are working to ensure safe passage for journalists forced to leave Afghanistan.

The IFJ and MEAA endorse and support the comments of Human Rights Watch associate Director Patricia Grossman who said yesterday:

“The Taliban have a long record of abusing or killing civilians they deem enemies, whether from inside or outside of Afghanistan, governments and UN offices should provide protection and assistance to at-risk Afghans and make processing travel documents and transportation a priority.”

The Australian Government should also increase support for civil society groups inside and outside of Afghanistan that promote human rights and a free press.

The IFJ has established a special Afghanistan Solidarity Fund within the IFJ Safety Fund to channel further support and urge those who can donate. All funds raised will go directly to providing support to Afghan colleagues.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information on the present letter.

Yours sincerely,



Jane Worthington
Director
IFJ Asia-Pacific



Marcus Strom
Federal President (Media)
Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance.