

The Role of the Media in Promoting Human Rights in Pakistan: Significance and Challenges

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Abstract

The media also very importantly performs in developing countries like Pakistan where human rights are vulnerable to violations, on one hand by shaping public discourse and on the other, to accountability and safeguards democratic values. As this article intends to be a critical appraisal of media's contribution (or lack thereof) to rights promotion in Pakistan, it tries to answer the question of how badly needed, how well is the media doing it and what are the myriad problems of ability (or inability as the case might) to do it. Since long in Pakistan, Pakistan is a phenomenon where media has done the two roles of the watchdog and the voice of the voiceless. It has used its compelling investigative journalism, on the ground reporting filled with advocacy campaigns to expose the likes of gender based violence, minority rights and enforced disappearance, freedom of expression. At the same time, it has placed it forward as an intermediary between civil society and the state and has enlarged the voices of human rights defenders and victims when their voices would be muffled.

This is neither a straight line nor has it no limits as far as the media's role in promoting human rights. Not only is it controlled by equally complex medleys of political pressure, legal restrictions, economic dependency, and security concerns, but also the Pakistani media. Censorship, threats of intimidation, actual intimidation (including being brutalised) are repeatedly applied against the press when dealing with military operations, religious extremism, state abuses. It generally works in an environment that tends to curtail journalistic freedom and prevent in depth reporting on human rights due to lack of precise laws of defamation, cybercrime and national security. Moreover, media ownership patterns, corporate interests typically affect editorial independence and thus biased or superficial treatment of human rights concerns. Social media has proven to be a phenomenal tool in human rights advocacy, but with such comes digital surveillance, misinformation, whatash and what new challenges it presents when human rights advocacy is advanced in the digital age.

In such circumstances, the media play an indispensable role in the development of the Pakistani human rights landscape. The rise and collaboration of these outlets and the opening of spaces to engage with civil society have created increasingly increasing spaces. Internationally, partnerships have also been built to train media resilience via training programs — capacity added in the

face of adversity including media capacity. If media is to make a positive contribution to human rights promotion in Pakistan, this paper believes that, in order for legal reform in the interests of press freedom to take place, investigative journalism can be better institutionally supported, and media literacy can be developed amongst the community. Additionally, this will also guarantee that all segments of society; especially those who are disadvantaged are duly and actually reflected in an environment of ethical journalism and pluralistic narratives. This article argues to provide a deeper understanding of the relations between structure, operation and media's role in Pakistan and their role in Pakistan in order to analyze the intersection of media and human rights in order to recommend policy suggestions on how to strengthen Pakistan's capability and functions as a human rights watch dog(Fox & Saunders, 2024).

Introduction

The media is the bedrock of accountability, of transparency and of citizenry made sense in any democratic society. But it also tells realities of society or public opinion, but it is also an awareness of injustices and it is accountability for power. In the case of Pakistan, a country of its own set of complex political dynamics, institutional weaknesses and deprived of human rights, media plays a critically important role. Pakistani media outlet have also been front to report on gender based violence, religious intolerance, energetic killings, enforced disappearances as well as giving attention into the human rights issues national or equally international (Human Honours Commission of Pakistan .(Plaisance, 2016)

Promoting human rights in Pakistan is paramount where the media has turned out to be of central position. The media, that is, in the print, electronic and digital media serves both to inform the public of rights and responsibilities and press public so that the state fulfils its constitutional and international obligations. For many years, media platforms have been employed as amplifiers of kwarg from the margins, to open up debate, and raise awareness on the need for legal reform and related social justice discussion. Brave journalists and editors have put their lives on the line to expose abuses of power and brought oppressive norms to light and spoken out for the voiceless. Considerably high risk has been taken to get to this point. However, there are counterfactuals in the link between human rights and media in Pakistan. It is country in a political volatile environment without free speech, has an unstable economy and security risks. Prosecutions, excessive censorship, harassment, arrests and, in the most salient cases, assassinations of the journalists reporting on areas censored or operational military or sectarian violence and state repression. Journalists face the pressure from the state and non-state actors alike, and Pakistan among many other

watchdogs is one of the most dangerous countries in the world in which journalists come. Each time that a Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) is introduced, defamation laws are used to continually stifle dissent, criminalize speech and censor investigative reporting.(Fox & Saunders, 2024).

In addition to direct threats, media landscape in Pakistan can better be understood as shaped by a number of structural and institutional problems. Media content has been commercialized and politicized; this has been done by a few hands to the extent of turning profit superseding the interests of the public. Many media houses are state advertised and corporate sponsored and they become dependent on them; which leaves most of them dependent and dependent on them that can result in editorial compromise and self-censors hip. That circus of ratings and sensationalism robs coverage of critical human rights issues of its quality and depth. The result of which some key stories are never reported or are reported, but there is no context or nuance to it. The rise of digital has also pushed digital media, digital media, digital media to serve as new outlets for activism, independent journalism, and citizen reporting in places, and among people normally left out of mainstream narratives. They have become vital platforms of documenting abuses, of mobilizing support and drawing attention to them: Twitter, Facebook and You Tube. Of course, these platforms are also sources of misinformation, propagandas, and as usual, online harassment of women journalists and human rights activists. However, it is only of recently that the surveillance and internet restrictions have reduced further the freedom of digital expression and privacy(Fox & Saunders, 2024).

Nevertheless, the media of Pakistan has not stopped being a human rights champion of sorts over the hurdles. That's a part investigative of programs, human rights columns, grassroots storytelling initiatives and awareness campaigns that give people a more informed and engaged public. Collaborations between journalists, civil society organizations, legal experts and international watch dog have also led impactful reporting and advocacy. However, in the case where the degree of freedom, safety and institutional support are high, the media is effective in this role of censorship because the media is trusted. This article tries to achieve an important role of media work in human rights in Pakistan with the critical analysis of the challenges hampering the media's work in human rights relevancy in Pakistan. This essay will critically examine the historical and present forms of human rights advocacy undertaken by media led human rights, assess legal and political constraints on the press freedom and explore how new media platforms are reparametrizing the human rights discourse. Overall, however, to retain and promote human rights in Pakistan, the media has to be empowered through founding of a capacity building fundaments, reform of the law and security measures(Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009).

Historical Overview of Media in Pakistan

The history of media in Pakistan since the partition of the country in 1947 is closely related to the political and social development of the country. The media landscape also always had enforced upon it the aspirations, struggles and constraints of the nation seeking to become what it is. Media in Pakistan was still in its first stage being few numbers of state controlled newspaper and radio stations. Most of these outlets served as little more than mouthpieces to echo the official narrative, and they had very little room for media with independent voices. In 1950s and 1960s Radio Pakistan had played the role of the primary mass medium of communication and served as a voice of and a tool for national integration. There were however few independent voices who were at this time, newspapers including Dawn, Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt. However, repeatedly, the periods of military rule were censors of press. By the time of General Ayub Khan's regime (1958–1969) they even enshrined institutionalized press control in laws (e.g. the Press and Publications Ordinance 1963 that allowed the government to close down publications and arrest journalists). The media was severely censored by General Zia ul Haq (1977 – 1988), journalists used to be sent to jail, tortured or were blacklisted (Frost, 2015).

Unlike the Pakistani media, however, it has proved tough. Underground newspapers, or brave journalists who still protested injustice, of course did during the repressive regimes. These seeds sown in this era would see the seeds that developed here go on to become an important part in the democratic struggle of the country. But indeed, the real turning point in Pakistan's media history was under the regime of General Pervez Musharraf and the early 2000. He also led his government to liberalize in media sector by permitting private TV channels and FM radio stations to function independently. Geo news, ARY news and Dunya news came in to make their places as channels during this time and completely changed the media landscape. The appearance of these independent broadcasters led to the fact that the media, moreover, are more actively involved in making public opinion, check the power, to uncover human rights issues(Frost, 2015).

No matter, they were not free. Media independence was also supported by state intervention by other disguised means, for example, pressurizing media owners, financial blackmail and regulatory crackdowns. If anything, in the 2010s, the emergence of digital and social media only made things more complicated for the picture: mean citizens had new ways around traditional gatekeepers, the spectre of new types of misinformation, and new ways to surveil. But now the Pakistani media is living in a complicated and most often contradictory situation: the moments of bravery and influence, but at the same time censorship, political manipulation and economic pressure. In fact, the struggle of free expression in

Pakistan's journey of media is actually a human rights and democracy struggle because media can be immensely powerful in the defiance of the same. This legacy continues to influence how media plays a role in the country in terms of progressing issues pertaining to justice and accountability (Christians, 2011).

The Evolution of Human Rights Awareness

But in the case of human rights, since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, there has been a great progression of awareness in Pakistan. First, in public sphere human rights were not much mentioned. However, the country's founding documents such as the Objectives Resolution and Constitution that have laid it down but have failed to be carried out or even realised among the mass, were key to the implementation of said fundamental rights. All that may, however, gradually change over time due to political movements, judicial activism, civil society efforts and media engagement (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan as the understanding, this time, and so demand for human rights spread in various sectors of the society (Christians, 2011).

In the early decades following independence, human rights discourse has been subject to being on political rights and freedoms, principally including a human being's right to vote, the right to speak freely, and safeguard from arbitrary detention. However, across the board, during periods of authoritarian rule there was censorship, detentions without trial, crackdowns on dissent, and so on, the concerns increased. This led inspiration of civil libertarians to defend rights and this would encourage rights based movements. The human rights awareness speeded up in the 1980s on its way to scale, which also had something to do with martial law era of General Zia-ul-Haq. This acquired his government a wave of resistance as his authorities enacted difficult policies towards women and minority. For instance, human rights commission of Pakistan (HRCP) was set up at this time as a civil society organization. It was used by these organizations to document violations and educate the public of their rights (Fox & Saunders, 2024).

The overall human rights movement was a strong aspect of the basis of women's rights. Many held these Hudood Ordinances as blatantly discriminatory. Thus, the national discourse on gender rights was entered into by women's groups, particularly the Women's Action Forum (WAF). Pakistan had also ratified the international conventions, promoting the human rights, under the international pressure and with growing emphasis on the rights of the children, the labor rights and the rights of the marginalized communities. However, in the 2000s a change took place on the wider scale now that media became liberalized and that of digital communication was introduced. Because of the growing popularity of private TV channels and internet, human rights issues have never and never will be exposed to such so much exposure like before. Besides, cases of honor killing,

police brutality, enforced disappearances and religious persecution were rising, and growing public debate was taking place regarding them. It was very helpful to pressure the authorities to address the problems and to demand legal reforms of child protection and assigned rights of women (International Federation for Human Rights) (Fox & Saunders, 2024).

At first it was followed by the further revolution of awareness through social media that provided commoners means to document and share the instances of injustice in the form of real time. Once things were hushed or were never talked about before, it was brought up on hashtags, online campaigns and viral videos. This also meant a lot more exposure and these challenges included backlash from some conservative parts and some attempts of the state to regulate online expression. But challenge always exists; never have human rights awareness in Pakistan reached its most advanced stage. It is different awareness across the urban and rural areas as well as deep rooted culture norms in their odium that hold so many from the realization of their rights. And despite the progress so far testimony to greater public awareness of the issues through education and activism and more important by way of the media passing on those voices of those who struggle to achieve justice and equality (Frost, 2015).

Media's Role in Exposing Human Rights Violations

The media has exposed human rights violation. Watchdogs of media organizations do investigative journalism, real time reporting and documentary storytelling to make Governments, corporations and similar entities account able for their abuse. This is as the media springs forth as a primary channel for the international community to be kept in the know of indignities which would have otherwise gone unnoticed (United Nations, 2021).

One of the most important functions of the media in the context is informing. The reporting of journalists on human rights violations more in war zones, detention centers or marginalized communities helps to put what is happening on the radar and lead to the right response. Protests mobilized by global outrage in response to Syrian Civil War and Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, or current media coverage of police brutality in the United States. These are often works by brave reporters and whistleblowers who find their own safety in order to lift the curtains of reality. For this reason, media can impact beyond informing the public to having influence to public opinion and policy. Graphic images, survivor testimonies, emotionally powerful stories and others can be used to mobilizes support for human rights causes and to pressure decision makers (Borden, 2013). For instance Alan Kurdi, the Syrian boy who drowned after trying to cross a refugee route was on that viral picture that changed the tone of the public discourse of the refugee crisis with the cry for humanitarian aid and reform of policies in Europe. International momentum for the movement

received traction as news spread that police had been brutalizing citizens in videos online and the Nigerian government (Amnesty International, 2020).

In particular, social media has overturned the schema of social right reporting. Such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram: Activists and average citizens can record on abuse in real time. This democratization of media enable communities to speak out, so to speak, and to connect themselves to the global community. Yet on the other side, such platforms are difficult because of misinformation, verification, and safe environments for content creators. But social media has not prevented marginalized voices from finding an audience or present information to speedily anoint the world.

The fact is that, though they do not have an easy job, the media does not have an easy job. Now censored, intimidated or imprisoned for writing about sensitive topics, journalists in countries all over the world have had their freedom denied to them. In authoritarian regimes, press freedom is not allowed to report on their atrocities, and are limited to stories. Also, media bias, sensationalism and the inability to understand the reality contextually can distort reality, or even reinforce a negative stereotype on its own. Yet in the case of a genuinely free and independent media, free speech is of the greatest importance. Journalists, photographers and media activists continue to promote accountability, and thus justice, as their dependence continues. The media uncovers abuses, gives a voice to the voiceless, uncovers levels of transparency and calls the global family to live by the idea of human dignity, equality (Borden, 2013).

Print Media's Contribution to Human Rights Discourse

In print media, human rights discourse has long provided the mute for lively shaping and sustained of knowledge and practice. This channel has used the newspapers, magazines, journals, etc to produce and disseminate information, to analyze the injustice and advocate for change. In spite of the digital age and the worth of print media, print media nonetheless has relevance and relevance in dealing with the digital age to offer in depth, credible and historically documented accounts of human rights issues (International Media Support [IMS], 2020). On the other hand, the strength of being well detailed and investigative is with print media itself. If instead we understand print journalism as the ability to provide more in depth coverage of human rights topics, the rapidity of digital news tends to oppose this to the speed of human rights news. An investigative article can portray the story of systemic racism, or gender inequality, or forced labor in a way that is eloquent and more so than a single headline. Well researched features and editorials do inform readers of individual violations, but also the social, political and economic structures which make such injustice possible, educating the reader on print media (Wilkins & Christians, 2020).

Archival work also done on print media itself. There are preserved historical records in newspapers and human rights journals such as events of abuse, opinions of the public, and changes in the policy. These are the same resources that are heavily used by researchers, legal experts, and activists whose sides draw upon facts in order to make their argument in number to support advocacy or litigation. For example, reports of apartheid in South Africa or civil rights movement in the United States remained highly significant within academic and legal debates in many decades to come (UNESCO, 2021). Also, print publications have space for marginalized voices. These op-ed columns and letters to the editor allow activists, survivors and minority communities to put in their own thoughts. This insertion, makes Democratic discourse deeper and it is a struggle for human rights which is not top down rather it is people who are experiencing it. Print media has played the role of an important support to grassroots movements in the past by providing visibility which provides legitimacy. Today print media is confronted by the ever changing media face. The digital platforms are trouncing traditional print outlets with their circulation levels going down and their financial condition also not being too great. However, the content and direction of this content are still worth and, up until a certain point, the print standards of journalistic ethics and investigative depth influence the digital content (Zerrweck et al., 2020).

The Influence of Television and Radio Journalism

All the issues relating to human right include impact of television and radio journalism in creating an awareness, to raising and issues and to change the policy. Both television and radio are two well-known media forms that are quite accessible, and also among the most far reaching forms of media, which have had key roles in documenting crimes, amplifying the voices of the neglected communities, and holding the powerful accountable.

First and foremost, television journalism has the very unique capacity to combine real time reporting and powerful visuals. Audience members can be emotionally exiled where the medium of visual storytelling relayed these stories. However, still iconic broadcasts ... such as the Vietnam War coverage, apartheid protests in South Africa, to name a few, and lately the George Floyd protests here in the United States ... become a cause of outrage, protests and calls for reform. This visual dimension of violence, discrimination, or humanitarian crises on the screen can actually drive such an audience to a feeling of urgency that pages on the page may fail to generate. On television news, it has a major position in agenda setting. The news outlets select which stories to emphasize and how in order to decide what human rights issues the public and the politicians will and will not attend to. Investigative programs and documentaries are often investigative programs and documentaries that shine the light on

abuses that would otherwise go undetected: corruption, or trying to expose police brutality, child labor, or refugees. On a negative note, however, television is also a powerful tool for accountability, since it can expose this as well, and put pressure on governments and institutions to answer (Caballero-Anthony & Cook, 2013).

Less visual, but no less powerful, radio journalism still does the trick, particularly where there is no television or Internet. Of special importance is the use of radio to reach remote and underserved communities using their languages as a powerful information and education medium? In situations where information about urgency, crime or conflict is required, or where information on abuses needs to be disseminated or where communities can be connected with legal or humanitarian support, radio can provide lifesaving information. Further, there are in the radio stations, such as talk shows, call in programmes and interviews, which allow for discussion and civic engagement. These platforms let people, activists and experts speak, express and discuss the people's rights, justice, and equality cases with freedom. (Caballero-Anthony & Cook, 2013). While the telecommunication media is growing, the television and the radio journalism remains the crucial aspects in the fight for the human rights. I believe they are immediacy, accessibility and the feeling of doing something together that can energize public sentiment and action. When broadcast journalism is done the right way, broadcasting still shines a light on the injustices of the world and spurs change movements.

Digital Media and the Rise of Citizen Journalism

The proliferation of the digital media has allowed the human rights issues to be reported and understood in completely different ways than how they were reported before. However, unlike traditional journalism, in which trained reporters and institutional support count, citizen journalists give average people the ability to document and report events as they happen over the Internet, via smartphones and social networking platforms. The change now brings information flow to democratize and the possibility to shine the spotlight on human rights violations that probably would have been overlooked (UN Human Rights Office, 2021).

However, immediacy is the most powerful thing about digital media. This enables the citizens to put videos, photographs or eyewitnesses accounts of the abuse that occurs on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or YouTube. As they are will be raw, unfiltered, content of police brutality, refugee hardship, political repressions, they ignore it and easily go viral and attract international attention. With the Arab Spring, protests happening with or without social media, you have the protests happening, government crackdown, the very spread of those protests

with photos, documented and spread through social media to everyone around the world and that has to have political consequences (Bedeski, 1992).

Citizen journalism has, as well, made it harder for oppressive regimes to deny the truth. Where press freedom is restricted, digital media steps up to the task as a lifeline of transparency. Activists and common people are able to use state controlled media to tell their stories, promote justice, and cutting-edge certain cases, bypass state controlled media to tell the world about injustice or to solicit support. As with other countries, such as Iran, Myanmar and Sudan, its form of grassroots reporting has been important in bringing into the limelight human rights abuses. Moreover, digital media fosters global solidarity. Wars against human rights violators become campaigns of online petitioning, viral videos, and hashtags with whose help they turn violators into persons under international pressure. Citizen reporting and digital activism, which spread worldwide, enabled public discourse, institutional responses and reforms (Freedom House, 2023, unfortunately, citizen journalism also has a few issues. It is possible that the spread of misinformation or biased reporting can happen without having professional training (Ali, Ali, & Abbas, 2017). In some cases, you may decide to take videos, posts or even what you yourself want to say and use it to foment more disruption. For example, in the virtual space it is of great importance and necessarily essential for media literacy and the responsible structure of content taking so that falsehood and the ethical standards are not violated.

Social Media: A Double-Edged Sword

Social media is one of the most powerful mediums of communication in our times and it is thus proven to be an important channel in human rights advocacy. It allows people and organizations to get by awareness, draw up facility and to improve the live slaving of injustice all over the world. How dangerous, how powerfully dangerous it is, social media is a dangerous weapon, but with so much good potential as a double edged sword to human rights. At the same time, social media gives freedom to the people that can automatically, or better to say a very quickly, document and report human rights violations. But they have a platform to have marginalized voices and awareness beyond that which can be yielded by a more traditional media, etc. has spearheaded global movements, a unity by distance, and a forced action by governments and institutions on issue of. Activists can use their phones to organize the protests, to share educational content and call powers to account. However, it can just as be misused. Social media, just as quick, spread misinformation, disinformation, and the kind of propaganda that will help annihilate a country faster, just as quick, as truth. Context and verification are missing from many of the false narratives that people shape without, which can give the false impression of strength or cause harm. Authoritarian regimes often use social media to become better

surveillance, harass or arrest activists to make these platforms tools of repression, not liberation (Iram & Fatima, 2008).

Also social media can be occasionally performative, i.e. something can happen: posting something or changing a background picture and this is what has been invented in the scholarship as ‘slacktivism’ (this is a virtual activity, being active in a symbolic gesture, with no real consequences). It can also numb greater problems and take your focus away from the work, the effect and the real world.

Case Studies: Media Advocacy in High-Profile Human Rights Cases

Media advocacy has helped win several high profile human rights cases as it raises the profile and leads to action. And abusers have been exposed by media and people have been mobilized in large numbers, putting pressure on governments and institutions to act, by the use of a combination of traditional and some digital platforms. Speaking of its notable cases, it includes the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. Later on media coverage of the genocide years after the events have been used to bring the atrocities to world attention, and justice and the necessity of a deal for reconciliation was demanded. BBC or CNN did coverage to the scale of the violence, or documentaries and reports that answered the violence, drawing international attention something that had clearly not been targeted at busting various weapons trafficking routes. For instance, General Archer’s participation has been somewhat credited to the ‘due demand for accountability’ due to the media driven demand for accountability regarding alleged Rwandan war crimes(Mansuri, 2006).

In addition to that, as BLM (Black Lives Matter) is another big case. More importantly, the violence of police sparked the globe in protest and topple demands with the leading of us by the media in the wake of George Floyd’s killing in 2020. With social media being Twitter and Instagram, the spread across with individuals sharing their stories as well as using the movement as a tool to mobilize protests in their respective geographical areas. Pressure was also put on policymakers to change their legislation by putting in place racial justice initiatives and reforms of police, and the issue of systemic racism was in news under news coverage and viral videocassettes.

(Khan, Khan, & Sattar, 2010) 2017 helped to push sexual harassment and assault—especially in the workplace—into the public’s consciousness through exposure of sexual violence, media advocacy has served the same end in fighting sexual violence, including in the workplace. The stories of powerful people’s predatory behavior, ran in high profile pieces like in The New York Times and The New Yorker, and brought about massive social change, legal reform and accountability in the likes of politics and entertainment. These case studies present the medium of media advocacy that has played an active role in revealing human rights violations thereby raising such issues to the planktonic for making

human rights violations conscience eye openers thereby bringing in the changed that matters.

Challenges of Press Freedom in Pakistan

For Pakistan, there are political, legal and social pressures preventing press freedom. It is an extremely restrictive media environment in which government authorities, the military, powerful political groups have a lot of powerful their clout over what people can see on the news. Censorship is the easiest of the main challenges. For instance, the Pakistani government uses direct and indirect means for the use of the media, for example banning of television channels, site blocking and press closure in sensitive places. Most journalists then chose to avoid topics that could offend the state and powerful political forces purely from a safety perspective. The second big challenge is violence and intimidation. Reporters covering issues such as corruption, human rights abuses or military activities are threatened, harassed, or physically attacked. Saleem Shahzad was a 42yr old on assignment for Newline when he was killed in 2011, in a sense he was murdered as he was trying to report the truth. The few legal restrictions, meaning the Anti-Terrorism Act and the blasphemy laws, have been used to a point to oppress journalists who criticize the government or military for curtailing free speech even further. However, Pakistan's media should have some challenges; it is important to focus on Pakistan's social, political, and human rights problem, but still, media in Pakistan constraints it to do a lot (Kashif & Hussain, 2013).

Censorship and Government Control over Media

Another problem is the existence of great censorship through the state's control over the media that go against the right to free speech and press freedom. Governments impose restrictions on media content in order to silence dissent, shape public perception or maintain political power. This may include banning of news outlets, closing down of critical publications and censoring of certain, sensitive or politically harmful subjects. In two thirds of authoritarian regimes, the government controls traditional media (television and radio, print), digital platforms, and neither allows an opposing narrative to be aired on the media. For instance, journalists in such countries as China, Russia, and Iran face very limited chances of working in media outlets that are both state owned and extremely controlled, with potential tough penalties for revealing corruption and challenging the government's policies.

Censorship is effective in more democratic societies because it is just more subtle. The Egyptians may be forced to comply with the government how the news should be reported by regulatory body, by incentive payment, or even threatened to stop the advertisement revenue. Moreover, journalists rarely have the chance to investigate or report on critical issues because anti-terrorism and/or national security laws are employed to explain the justification for censorship (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2022). Censorship stops democracy by removing free exchange of ideas, where views no longer have a chance to be heard from many standpoints – which gives no accountability. Independent free media is essential to the principle of containment of power who know not what (Kasymova, 2014).

Threats and Intimidation Faced by Journalists

The threats and intimidation of the journalists vary in every way but they impact their safety and brand it difficult for them to report the truth. More specifically, these are very well known risks in countries with repressive governments, people living in the conflict zone or in the areas under the control of strong criminal organizations. Physical violence, harassment, arbitrary detention and even murder are the threats. Many times journalists have been targeted for work on corruption, abuse of citizens' rights, or political corruption. But high profile cases like Jamal Khashoggi being assassinated in Saudi Arabia or Daphne Caruana Galizia killed in Malta remind us that, in this modern, online era announcing the powerful is seriously dangerous for many

modern, online journalists. According to the chilling message: These killings are only fraction of thousands of other threats made to investigative reporters, enough to stop any other reporting. Besides physical violence, they work under psychological pressure of threats to their families and livelihood, and even of threats to journalists. At least in some countries, media outlets or individual journalists are put under legal threats, harassed by campaigns, imprisoned, for reporting on politically sensitive subjects, like working on political dissent or corruption (Kasymova, 2014). Even though threats and intimidation to journalists are still persisting, there are very poor efforts to counter and to help restrain such threats and intimidation to make press freedom inexistent and to impede the public access to information. Journalists must be silenced, because it weakens the answerability and the transparency, therefore societies are impeded in addressing the critical questions and observing the human rights.

The Role of Media Regulatory Authorities

Thus, the media regulatory authorities must help media operators to function in the bounds of the legality, legality in practice and on principle. In the UK, three major public authorities are responsible for the ensuring the content transmitted on television, radio and digitals lies in accordance with the national laws and regulations. Thus, the major goals they self-set out for themselves are to protect public interest, ensure the content is fair, and prevent the spread of harmful or misleading content. Media regulatory bodies play one of the main key functions enforcement of broadcasting standards. It helps in ensuring that news is reported properly with an appropriate measure of accuracy, impartiality and fairness, without bias and distortion, as the case may be. They are usually these authorities who usually set some rules on how to be hate speech, defame and obscene content, so on, meaning that they have responsibility in reporting. The regulatory authorities have another responsibility such as licensing and competition of the media industry. Third, they make sure that media outlets are not a monopoly, that there is no monopoly in the media, which media has not become a monopoly, and that diversity of media ownership is very important in free press. Media regulatory bodies can however be double edged swords. Thus, government may also use regulatory authorities to some extent in censoring or to control what is being published in the media, thereby limiting freedom of expression. In that case these authorities need to be independent and be subject to democratic values as well as press freedom that is guaranteed but there are safeguard for public in interest (Kennedy, 1991).

Media Bias and the Risk of Misinformation

For something that needs to be addressed in modern Journalism, in our time, when the Internet is here, where digital platforms are being created, and 24 news cycles are running; media bias and misinformation is a very scary thing. These outlets are called to have ‘media bias’ if they ‘report’ one side – one perspective, one ideology, or one group against another perspective or ideology. When it is exhibited as a selective coverage, framing of the issue or tone in the headlines and reporting of events, it can be used to distort the actions and represent them in some way.

Misinformation is a risk when it comes to media bias. This misleads or leads to wrong information getting spread among media outlets by posting or broadcasting an factual or inaccurate narrative. Also, inn social media, an example would be, when you hear sensational headlines or even unverified contents, they travel much faster and can be in a more viral nature and can sound into divides an opinion. More broadly, controlling the spread of misinformation comes into play as they relate to critical matters of health, politics, or human rights and it is important that this become so in order to avoid confusion, fear and ill-advised reaction in the face of deliberation (Kennedy, 1991).

What should be borne in mind about media, particularly, is that they have a very grievous duty to take the steps necessary to prevent dealing with these risks and with that, the application of

ethical journalism as such as fact checking, balanced reporting, making sourcing transparent etc. Moreover, they also have to critically consume information they get through the media because they need to cross check the source through as much as possible and be aware of the possible bias in the media they are consuming the information. One has to fight the misinformation at the end of day, it doesn't matter whether it's responsible media of educated buyer. Given the importance of transparency, human rights, and democratic values, a number of key suggestions can be made in order for the news media to play a more facilitative role in accomplishing transparency, human rights and democratic values in Qatar(Kennedy, 1991).

1. **Encourage Media Literacy:** It is a must that in public education the field of media literacy is provided so that audiences can critically evaluate news sources, recognize biases, and detect misinformation. Schools and organizations should give resources for people who can be able to judge the media content and understand what it can be in terms of its influence.
2. **Promote Journalistic Integrity:** They should be committed to the journalistic ethical aspects such as accuracy and fairness and impartial to promote journalistic integrity. To maintain credibility misinformation has no place in, that is communication with the source, independence from any influence or agenda, fact check mechanisms, a more transparent sourcing process than in the current affair and two prizes.
3. **Protect Press Freedom:** Governments and other international bodies should pass laws to protect journalists from their harassment, violence and censorship, in order to protect press freedom. Strong legal framework and support to media to run freestyle without being taken hostage is essential for encouraging investigative reporting.
4. **Support Diverse Media Ownership:** They recommend that we must support diverse media outlets since monopolistic information control needs to be discouraged. A perfect form to expose a bunch of viewpoints and voices would be to move through the public conversation in the media.
5. **Leverage Digital Platforms Responsibly:** use Digital Platforms to undermine harmful misinformation, hate speech, and vote manipulation while protecting freedom of expression. Tech companies and media companies can ensure that content is correctly disseminated through partnerships.

These measures will add to the power of the media to act as a powerful force of accountability and social change.

Conclusion:

Despite that media has an important role to perform for promoting human rights in Pakistan, it is a tough job. The media has, however, contributed mightily since then by helping us know of and expose them, and help for justice. However, while the mosaic stands, censorship, state interference, financial pressures and lack of journalistic safety hobble its effectiveness. However, it is still a matter of course that press continues to be vital in the cause of combating for the human rights since, on the contrary, it is able to mislead the public opinion, direct the public debate, and control power. What needs to be done is to further strengthen media independence, protect journalists, and not let freedom of expression be whacked. To empower the media truly as a catalyst for human rights, the will of the civil society will not be effective enough to support and encourage the media to be off the limit of the government's undue influence. Additionally, additional resources need to be dedicated toward digital literacy in order to navigate through the trap of social media, misinformation and cyber censorship. The media in Pakistan must be indeed a very very powerful, very very very fearless advocate for the values of justice, equality, the dignity of everyone, and just, especially, seeking to give voice to those

without it, but for human rights to prosper in Pakistan and to flourish, the media must be a very very powerful, very fearful advocate for the values of justice, everybody has the equal dignity. For the recommendations and topics that are raised, there are references available on the below.

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