

A Dossier of Death: Uninvestigated and Unprosecuted Deaths of Journalists in Pakistan

According to CPJ research, since the 2002 killing of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, at least 15 other journalists have lost their lives in intentionally targeted killings in Pakistan. But, unlike Pearl's murder, none of the other journalists' deaths have been prosecuted and virtually all of them have gone uninvestigated. CPJ firmly believes that the same intense efforts the government brought to bear in Pearl's killing should be carried out in the cases of the other journalists who have died in Pakistan.

Pakistan has one of the world's worst records for impunity in the killing of journalists. It ranks 10th in the world on CPJ's Impunity Index, which measures the number of unsolved journalist murders as a percentage of the population. But, while murders make up more than 70 percent of work-related deaths among journalists around the world, according to CPJ research, in Pakistan, targeted killings have only counted for 50 percent of reporters' deaths. The rest have come as a result of indiscriminate violence or crossfire during conflicts, a regrettable reality for many in Pakistan.

With the successful prosecution of many of these journalist's deaths, Pakistan could remove itself from CPJ's Impunity Index, setting an example for the rest of the world.

Wali Khan Babar

Geo TV

January 13, 2011, in Karachi, Pakistan

Reporter Babar was shot shortly after filing a report about gangland clashes in Karachi's Liaquatnagar district. At least two assailants intercepted Babar's car while it was stopped in traffic at 9:20 p.m., shooting him multiple times in the head and neck, Geo TV Managing Director Azhar Abbas told CPJ. One assailant spoke to Babar briefly before opening fire, Abbas said.

Babar had been covering a police operation that ensued after a shooting earlier in the day, and his story had just aired on Geo TV. More than 17 people were killed in Karachi during civil unrest that day. The violence was blamed on political and sectarian fighting as well as general gang violence.

Speaking at a rally the day after Babar's death, Geo Karachi Bureau Chief Faysal Aziz Khan said that no government official had contacted the station in the many hours after Babar's killing. "No one from the government has approached us regarding the incident. Also, no senior police officials are ready to tell the media about the murderers of Babar and explain the details," Pakistani media quoted Khan as saying.

Misri Khan

Ausaf* and *Mashriq

September 14, 2010, in Hangu, Pakistan

Khan, a newspaper reporter and head of the local journalists association, was shot several times as he entered the press club building in Hangu, a volatile town near the border with Afghanistan, according to news reports and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists. Shahid Sabir, news editor for the Urdu-language daily *Ausaf*, said two or more assailants had apparently been lying in wait.

Khan was a reporter for *Ausaf*, as well as *Mashriq*, an Urdu-language daily published in Peshawar, provincial capital of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province (the former North West Frontier Province). Khan was also president of the Hangu Union of Journalists.

The English-language *Dawn* daily reported that Khan had received threats from militant organizations. Khan had been a journalist for more than 20 years, reporting for several newspapers during his career, according to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists. He was survived by a wife, six sons, and five daughters.

Ghulam Rasool Birhamani

Daily Sindhu Hyderabad

May 9 or 10, 2010, in Wahi Pandhi, Pakistan

The body of Birhamani, 40, a reporter for the *Daily Sindhu Hyderabad*, was found outside his hometown of Wahi Pandhi, Sindh province, on May 10, a day after he had been reported kidnapped. The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and the media support group Pakistan Press Foundation reported that his body was badly scarred and showed evidence of torture.

Birhamani's family believed he was killed because of his reporting on ethnic issues in Sindh province, the journalists union said. A colleague told the newspaper *Dawn* that Birhamani's story on the marriage of a 12-year-old girl to a 22-year-old man might have been the specific trigger for the attack. Birhamani had received threats from members of the Lashari tribe just days before he was seized, the press foundation said.

Hundreds of journalists turned out for a march to protest his killing. *Dawn* quoted some of the demonstrators as saying that police were reluctant to investigate because of political sensitivities. The journalists union said Birhamani had worked for many years for various Sindhi-language dailies. He left behind a wife, two sons, and a daughter.

Janullah Hashimzada

Shamshad TV

August 24, 2009, in Jamrud, Pakistan

Three unidentified gunmen fired at the Afghan journalist and his colleague, Ali Khan, while they were traveling on a public minibus near the town of Jamrud, Khyber Agency, northwestern Pakistan, according to local and international news reports.

A white car carrying the gunmen intercepted the bus with Hashimzada and Khan as it was en route to Peshawar from the Afghan border town of Torkham, according to The Associated Press. The gunmen targeted the journalists, killing Hashimzada and severely injuring Khan, according to AP. No other injuries were reported.

Both journalists worked for Afghanistan's Shamshad TV. Hashimzada, the station's Peshawar-based bureau chief for Pakistan, also reported for AP, the Pajhwok Afghan News agency, and other news outlets, the reports said. No one claimed responsibility for the killing, according to news reports. Hashimzada was known as a critic of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, and his reports had challenged authorities and intelligence agencies in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, the reports said. "He received threats four weeks ago to leave Peshawar and not report Taliban and Al-Qaeda activity in Pakistan. It is clear ... he lost his life for reporting," Danish Karokhel, director of Pajhwok Afghan News agency, told CPJ.

Musa Khankhel**Geo TV and *The News***

February 18, 2009, in Swat, Pakistan

No one claimed responsibility for the killing of Khankhel, who died in the first violation of a truce called two days earlier between the government and local militant groups, according to local and international news reports. Khankhel was targeted while covering a peace march led by Muslim cleric Sufi Muhammad, father-in-law of local Taliban leader Maulana Fazlullah, the reports said. Muhammad was seeking to recruit his son-in-law to join a ceasefire agreement he had negotiated with the government.

Geo Managing Director Azhar Abbas told CPJ that Khankhel had become separated from the rest of his four-person reporting team in a militant-controlled area near the town of Matta. He suffered multiple gunshot wounds to the torso and back of the head, Abbas said. A BBC report citing Khankhel's brother said the journalist had been abducted at gunpoint from the peace march, and that his hands and feet were bound when his body was discovered.

Khankhel was native to the region and had worked for Geo for five years, with a reputation as an aggressive and courageous reporter, local journalists told CPJ. He also filed for the Geo-affiliated daily *The News*.

Abdul Razzak Johra**Royal TV**

November 3, 2008, in Punjab, Pakistan

Six armed men dragged reporter Johra from his home in the Mianwali district of Punjab and shot him, according to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ). The attack came a day after his report on local drug trafficking was aired nationally. Colleagues said Johra, 45, who had done earlier reports on the drug trade, had received threats telling him to stop covering the issue.

Mianwali, though technically part of Punjab, is historically linked to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan that lie along the border with Afghanistan. The district is known for vendettas and political infighting, but PFUJ Secretary-General Mazhar Abbas said local journalists believe Johra's reporting on the drug trade led to the slaying. Police acknowledged the killing but took no evident steps to investigate, according to PFUJ.

Mohammed Ibrahim

Express TV and *Daily Express*

May 22, 2008, in Khar, Pakistan

Ibrahim, a reporter for Express TV, was gunned down by unknown men outside Khar, the main town of the Bajaur tribal area in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, according to news reports. The journalist was returning by motorcycle from an interview with local Taliban spokesman Maulvi Omar, according to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and Imtiaz Ali, a *Washington Post* correspondent based in the nearby regional capital of Peshawar.

Reuters quoted a local journalist saying the attackers took Ibrahim's camera. They also took footage of the interview, Ali told CPJ by email, after speaking with local reporters. Ali said that Ibrahim also worked for the Urdu-language *Daily Express*.

Bajaur is part of the restive Federally Administered Tribal Areas of the North West Frontier Province, where local authorities and international Afghanistan-based military forces were fighting with militant groups for control.

Chishti Mujahid

Akbar-e-Jehan

February 9, 2008, in Quetta, Pakistan

An unknown gunman killed Mujahid, a veteran columnist for the weekly, in a targeted attack outside his home in Quetta.

Mujahid, who was also a photographer, was struck in the head and chest as he left his house, according to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and local news reports. A spokesman for the banned insurgent group, the Baluch Liberation Army, claimed responsibility for the murder in a phone call to the Quetta Press Club, saying Mujahid was "against" the Baluch cause, local news reports said. Mujahid, an ethnic Punjabi, had received several telephone threats after writing about the killing of Baluch leader Balach Marri in November 2007, according to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists. *Akbar-e-Jehan*, published by the Jang Media Group, is one of the largest weekly Urdu-language magazines in Pakistan.

Quetta is the capital of Baluchistan province in southwestern Pakistan, where ethnic Baluch militants were engaged in protracted combat with government forces over political autonomy and local resources.

Zubair Ahmed Mujahid

Jang

November 23, 2007, in Mirpur Khas, Pakistan

Mujahid, correspondent for the national Urdu-language daily *Jang*, was shot dead while traveling on a motorcycle with another journalist in the city of Mirpur Khas in the southern province of Sindh, according to local news reports. He was targeted by unidentified gunmen, also traveling by motorcycle.

Local journalists believed their colleague was slain because of his investigative reporting, according to Owais Aslam Ali, secretary-general of the local media group Pakistan Press Foundation. Mujahid was known for his critical writing on a variety of issues-including alleged mistreatment of the poor by local landlords and police-in his *Jang* weekly column, "Crime and Punishment." His coverage of alleged police brutality had led to arrests and suspensions of police officers, Ali told CPJ.

Mujahid was survived by a wife and four sons. No arrests were immediately reported.

Hayatullah Khan

Freelance

June 16, 2006, in Miran Shah, Pakistan

Khan's body was found by villagers in the North Waziristan town of Miran Shah, where he had been kidnapped six months earlier. Khan was abducted on December 5, 2005, by five gunmen who ran his car off the road as his younger brother, Haseenullah, watched helplessly. Local government officials and family members said Khan, 32, had been found handcuffed and shot several times. His body appeared frail and he had grown a long beard since he was last seen, Pakistani journalists told CPJ.

The day before his abduction, Khan had photographed the apparent remnants of a U.S.-made missile said to have struck a home in the tribal region's main town, Miran Shah, on December 1, 2005, killing senior al-Qaeda figure Hamza Rabia. The pictures—widely distributed by the European Pressphoto Agency on the same day they were shot—contradicted the Pakistani government's explanation that Rabia had died in a blast caused by explosives located within the house. International media identified the fragments in the photographs as part of a Hellfire missile, possibly fired from a U.S. drone.

Khan, who was also a reporter for the Urdu-language daily *Ausaf*, had received numerous prior threats from Pakistani security forces, Taliban members, and local tribesmen because of his reporting.

During his six-month disappearance, government officials provided Khan's family with numerous and often contradictory accounts of his whereabouts: Khan was in government custody, soon to be released; Khan had been abducted by "miscreant;" he had been taken by Waziristan mujahedeen; he had been flown to the military base at Rawalpindi and then detained in Kohat air base.

After the body was found, Khan's relatives were told by hospital workers that he had suffered five or six bullet wounds and that one hand had been manacled in distinctive handcuffs typically used by Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency. Mahmud Ali Durrani, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, dismissed the reported presence of the handcuffs as circumstantial and said the cuffs could have been planted to incriminate the government. No autopsy was performed.

An investigation led by High Court Justice Mohammed Reza Khan was conducted, but the results were not made public. Khan's family said they were not interviewed by the judge or other investigators. North West Frontier Gov. Ali Mohammad Jan Orakzai told CPJ that North Waziristan was not secure enough to risk exposing a judicial figure to kidnapping or death.

Allah Noor

Khyber TV

Amir Nowab

Associated Press Television News and *Frontier Post*

February 7, 2005, in Wana, Pakistan

Gunmen in the capital of the remote South Waziristan tribal area fatally shot Amir Nowab, also known as Mir Nawab, a freelance cameraman for Associated Press Television News and a reporter for the *Frontier Post* newspaper, and Allah Noor, who was working for Peshawar-based Khyber TV.

The journalists were on their way back from the town of Sararogha, where they were covering the surrender of suspected tribal militant Baitullah Mehsud.

A car overtook the journalists' bus at around 7:30 p.m. near the town of Wana, and assailants opened fire with AK-47 assault rifles, according to The Associated Press, which quoted Mahmood Shah, chief of security for Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.

Two other journalists riding in the bus were injured. Anwar Shakir, a stringer for Agence France-Presse, was wounded in the back during the attack, according to news reports. Dilawar Khan, who was working for Al-Jazeera, received minor injuries.

Days later, an unknown group calling itself "Sipah-e-Islam" (Soldiers of Islam) took responsibility for the killings in a letter faxed to newspapers. It accused some journalists of "working for Christians" and of "being used as tools in negative propaganda...against the Muslim mujahedeen."

Local journalists blamed officials for not doing more at the time of the murders. They said no attempt was made to stop the gunmen's vehicle even though the attack took place in an area under government

control. They also said no real investigation into the murders took place.

The Pakistani military launched a major offensive against suspected al-Qaeda fighters in South Waziristan, a semiautonomous tribal region, in early 2004. Access to areas of the fighting is increasingly restricted for all journalists, and threats from militants make reporting conditions very dangerous, local sources say.

Sajid Tanoli

Shumal

January 29, 2004, in Mansehra, Pakistan

Tanoli, 35, a reporter with the regional Urdu-language daily *Shumal*, was killed in the town of Mansehra in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province. Tanoli was stopped on a highway, dragged from his car and shot several times, the Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

Tanoli had written critically about the head of the local government, including a story three days before the slaying that described an allegedly illegal liquor business run by the politician. Local journalist groups condemned the killing, which they said was motivated by Tanoli's reporting.

Fazal Wahab

Freelance

January 21, 2003, in Mingora, Pakistan

Wahab, a freelance writer, was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen while he was sitting in a roadside shop in Manglawar Bazaar, near the resort town of Mingora in northwestern Pakistan. The shopkeeper and his young assistant also died in the attack.

Wahab, who lived in Mingora, had published several books in Urdu and in Pashto—the language spoken in the border region of Pakistan and parts of neighboring Afghanistan—that criticized local religious leaders and Islamic militant organizations.

Local journalists and human rights activists told CPJ that Wahab had been receiving threats for years in response to his writings. His colleagues believe that he was targeted for his work.

Among Wahab's most controversial works was a book titled *Mullah Ka Kirdar* (The Mullah's Role), which analyzed the Islamic clergy's involvement in politics. He had also recently completed a manuscript about Osama bin Laden and the Taliban.

During the last decade, a militant group known as Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-e-Mohammadi (Movement for

the Enforcement of Islamic Law) has gained strength in Mingora and the surrounding Malakand Region. Wahab's writings and outspoken opposition to radical and militant strains of Islam made him particularly vulnerable to attack.

Shahid Soomro

Kawish

October 20, 2002, in Kandhkot, Pakistan

Soomro, a correspondent for the Sindhi-language newspaper *Kawish*, was assassinated in the town of Kandhkot, Sindh Province, apparently in reprisal for his reporting on abuses committed during general elections held on October 10.

At around midnight on October 20, three men went to Soomro's home and tried to abduct him, according to his younger brother Aziz, who witnessed the crime. When Soomro resisted, the men shot him dead. *Kawish* editor Ali Kazi said that Soomro had at least nine bullet wounds and died almost instantly.

The gunmen escaped with two accomplices in a white car waiting outside Soomro's house, said local news reports.

Aziz filed a case with police identifying three of the assailants by name, Wahid Ali Bijarani, Mohammad Ali Bijarani, and Mohammad Siddiq.

Wahid Ali and Mohammad Ali, who are brothers, are members of the powerful Bijarani family, which owns much land in the area around Kandhkot and exercises considerable influence through the feudal system still prevalent in much of Pakistan. A third brother, Mir Mehboob Bijarani, was elected to the Sindh Provincial Assembly in the October 10, 2002, poll, while an uncle, Mir Hazzar Khan Bijarani, won a seat in the National Assembly. (Both represented former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party.)

Soomro's colleagues suspect that he was killed for his reporting about alleged abuses committed by Bijarani family members and supporters during the general elections. Soomro had a reputation for courageous, independent reporting, and his publication, *Kawish*, is one of the most influential newspapers in Sindh Province.