



March 13, 2026

H.E. Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Prime Minister, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Prime Minister's Office,

Constitution Avenue, Islamabad, Pakistan

Dear Prime Minister

We, the undersigned organisations defending press freedom and the right to information, write to express our deep alarm at the intensifying harassment, arbitrary arrests, and deportations of Afghan journalists in exile in Pakistan. This crackdown is unfolding as military tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have escalated, and has reportedly accelerated since Islamabad described the situation as an “open war” on 27 February. The Afghan journalists are now being targeted after they fled Afghanistan precisely because of the Taliban regime persecution.

Over the past week, multiple Afghan journalists living in exile in Pakistan have reportedly been arrested and placed in detention centres. These arrests add to the 20-odd cases documented since the beginning of 2026. Even more concerning, at least six journalists supported by RSF have been forcibly returned to Afghanistan in the last 15 days, bringing the total to nine since January this year.

The risks they face upon return to Afghanistan are acute and foreseeable. In this context, deporting Afghan journalists amounts to exposing them to retaliation, arbitrary detention, and worse.

We therefore urge the Government of Pakistan to take immediate and concrete steps to end this repression and uphold its responsibilities:

1. Immediately halt the arbitrary arrest, detention, harassment, and forced deportation of Afghan journalists in exile in Pakistan.
2. Respect the principle of non-refoulement and ensure that no journalist or media worker is returned to Afghanistan when they face a risk of persecution, torture, or

other serious harm.

3. Release all detained Afghan journalists who have been held solely in connection with their immigration status or identity as Afghan nationals.
4. Provide a temporary protection framework for Afghan journalists awaiting resettlement to third countries, including clear guidance to police and local authorities to immediately end the severe harassment, extortion, and unlawful detention of journalists across Pakistan, particularly in the Islamabad region.

We stand ready to engage constructively with your government and relevant authorities to support solutions that respect security needs while fully complying with Pakistan's human rights obligations.

Sincerely,

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Committee To Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Free Press Unlimited (FPU)