



Committee to Protect Journalists

To
Shri. Rajeev Chandrasekhar,
State President - Kerala,
Bharatiya Janata Party

Subject: Strengthening press freedom and journalist safety in Kerala through electoral commitment

Respected Honorable Leader of Bharatiya Janata Party,

As Kerala prepares for the upcoming state assembly elections next year, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent, nonprofit press freedom organization, respectfully urges your esteemed political party, Bharatiya Janata Party, to include a strong commitment to press freedom and the safety of journalists in your election manifesto.

A free, independent, and safe press is indispensable to a vibrant democracy. However, journalists across India — including in Kerala — face increasing threats to both their physical and digital security. Intimidation, harassment, surveillance, censorship, and restrictive regulations undermine the press's ability to operate independently and to serve the public's right to information. By making an explicit electoral commitment, your party can demonstrate national leadership in protecting the rights of journalists and strengthening democratic values.

Key areas of concern:

- **Legal Safety:** Journalists sometimes face legal actions, bureaucratic pressure, or procedural intimidation, which can restrict their ability to report freely.
- **Digital safety:** Expansive laws and regulations can enable censorship, surveillance, and forced content takedowns, endangering journalists' work and privacy.
- **Physical safety:** Journalists continue to face intimidation and, at times, violence, which restricts their freedom to report.
- **Financial and regulatory pressures:** Independent media outlets are vulnerable to punitive tax actions, bureaucratic hurdles, and funding restrictions that threaten editorial independence.

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- **Access to information:** Barriers in obtaining timely government responses, participation in official briefings, and the ineffective use of RTI limit the ability of journalists to inform the public.

Suggested commitments for inclusion in the election manifesto:

- Guarantee protection from harassment, detention, and violence, ensuring the physical safety of journalists.
- Safeguard digital rights by protecting against unlawful surveillance, censorship, and arbitrary removal of content.
- Uphold editorial independence by opposing laws or actions that restrict reporting and investigative journalism.
- Promote transparency by facilitating fair and timely access to government information, press briefings, and RTI responses.
- Ensure fair, transparent, and safe working conditions for journalists across Kerala.

Incorporating these commitments into your party's manifesto would not only strengthen Kerala's democratic foundations but also reaffirm your government and party's vision of inclusive governance and respect for free press.

We would be honored to engage further with you or your policy team to discuss these recommendations in detail.

With utmost respect,

Kunal MAJUMDER
Asia Pacific Program Coordinator
Committee to Protect Journalists