



Committee to Protect Journalists

*Sent via email*

Date: 9th March, 2026

To  
Shri Subhankar Sarkar  
President  
West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee

**Subject: Strengthening press freedom and journalist safety in West Bengal through electoral commitment**

Respected Shri Sarkar,

As West Bengal prepares for the upcoming state assembly elections in a few weeks, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent, nonprofit press freedom organization, respectfully urges your esteemed party, Indian National Congress, 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 West Bengal — 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.

The Indian National Congress has long emphasized democratic institutions, civil liberties, and the importance of a free and independent press. In this context, a clear and explicit commitment in your party's election manifesto to safeguard journalists and uphold press freedom in West Bengal would be a significant and welcome step.

**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, particularly while covering political events, protests, or elections.

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**Financial and regulatory pressures:** Independent media outlets are vulnerable to punitive tax actions, bureaucratic hurdles, and funding restrictions that threaten editorial independence.

**Access to information:** Barriers in obtaining timely government responses, participation in official briefings, and the effective 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 West Bengal.

Incorporating these commitments into your party's manifesto would strengthen democratic institutions in West Bengal and reaffirm a commitment to protecting press freedom and the public's right to information.

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 Coordinator  
Committee to Protect Journalists