

# Journalists, media workers hold rallies against downsizing, curbs

**ISLAMABAD:** Journalists and media workers held rallies across the country on Tuesday in protest against downsizing, stopping of advertisements and measures aimed at curbing newspapers circulation and TV channels' transmission in certain areas.

The protest rallies were held on the call of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ-Afzal Butt group).

In Islamabad, journalists and media workers took out a procession that set off from the National Press Club and ended at a roundabout near the Parliament House. Members of civil society, lawyers, doctors, teachers and labour union leaders joined them to express their solidarity with media houses.

Speaking on the occasion, PFUJ president Afzal Butt demanded that the government break its silence over the issue.

"Instead of imposing curbs on free flow of information and stopping government advertisements, the information ministry should hold owners and managements of TV channels and newspapers accountable who were not paying salary to media staff and some of them even sacking journalists," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, senior lawyer of Supreme Court Ali Ahmed Kurd expressed his solidarity with journalists and media workers and condemned unannounced curbs placed on media organisations.

He said that free thinking and freedom of expression were basic rights of the people and these rights were must for progress of any society and the nation.

Veteran journalists Nasir Zaidi, Nasir Malik and Nusrat Javed,

civil society activist Tahira Abdullah and leaders of several trade unions also addressed the rally.

They said the country's leading newspapers and TV channels were facing unannounced restrictions, while circulations, distribution and broadcast of some TV channels had been stopped in certain areas of the country.

They also condemned the owners and managements of some media organisations who were not paying salary to their staff in time and said that in some TV channels, anchors and top executives had been hired at hefty salary packages, but salary of low-paid workers was being delayed for two to three months.

## **Karachi**

Dozens of journalists along with human rights activists and political leaders marched from the Karachi Press Club to the Governor House and staged a sit-in to protest against unannounced censorship and layoff of their fraternity members.

The protest march and sit-in, jointly organised by the Karachi Union of Journalists (KUJ) and All-Pakistan News Employees' Confederation (Apnec), warned the government against any action on the freedom of expression and demanded that the media owners protect economic rights of their employees.

Addressing demonstrators, PFUJ secretary general Ayub Jan Sarhandi said the struggle for freedom of the press and for the rights of working journalists and media workers would continue despite all odds. The struggle, he said, was part of the countrywide campaign of the PFUJ and it would not let anyone usurp democratic rights of the people and ensure economic well-being of journalists and media workers.

## Lahore

The PFUJ, Apnec and Punjab Union of Journalists held a protest against downsizing, censorship and non-payment of salary to journalists and media workers.

A number of journalists gathered at the Chairing Cross on the Mall Road and protested against imposition of censorship on media outlets.

The journalists said the censorship was damaging the media industry and resulting in downsizing.

“Hundreds of media workers have already lost their jobs and the government should not force them to take to the streets,” they said.

Punjab Minister for Information Fayyazul Hassan Chohan met the protesting journalists and said the government would contact the owners of media houses for payment of salary to journalists and media workers.

He said the government would stop advertisements to those media organisations which did not pay salary to their workers.

## Peshawar

Journalists and media workers started their protest march from the Peshawar Press Club and gathered at Sher Shah Suri Road.

The protest was organised by the Khyber Union of Journalists (KhUJ) on the call of the PFUJ.

KhUJ president Saif-ul-Islam Saifi, Peshawar Press Club president Alamgir Khan, political leaders Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao, Maulana Abdul Jalil Jan, advocate Farah advocate Haji Mohammad Afzal and the president of the KP Chamber of Commerce and Industry addressed the participants of the protest.

Speaking on the occasion, leaders of the media community recalled the ordeal faced by journalists and other media workers during the recent militancy when around 115 journalists lost their lives while performing their duties, but successive governments neither launched any investigation into the matter nor arrested the culprits or extended any financial support to members of the affected families.

## **Quetta**

In Quetta and other parts of Balochistan, hundreds of journalists, editors, media workers and local newspapers' owners also staged protest rallies.

Members of the Balochistan Union of Journalists, Quetta Press Club and workers of different print and electronic media organisations staged a protest rally outside the Quetta Press Club.