Beat: Politics

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The ban on PAKISTANI journalists.

London, 13.06.2026, 08:43 Time

USPA NEWS - The ban on journalists'
entry after certain hours and restrictive entry into the Supreme Court premises constitutes an unconstitutional and disproportionate restriction on freedom of expression and citizens' right to receive information.

It directly undermines Articles 19 and 19?A of the Constitution of Pakistan, which guarantee freedom of speech and the fundamental right of access to information, and which the Supreme Court itself has repeatedly affirmed as binding on all public bodies, including the superior judiciary.

This measure also conflicts with Pakistan's obligations under international human rights law, particularly Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which protect the right to seek, receive and impart information through any media and require that any restriction be lawful, necessary and proportionate.

By excluding journalists from open court proceedings, the ban erodes the principle of open justice, weakens public accountability of the judiciary, and restricts the public's ability to scrutinize an institution that is funded by taxpayers and constitutionally bound to transparency.

We therefore call upon the competent authorities to immediately withdraw this ban, to reaffirm their commitment to constitutional guarantees and international standards on freedom of expression and access to information, and to engage constructively with domestic and international human rights organisations to ensure that court reporting remains free, fair and unhindered.
Said : Mohammed Azhar Siddique
(Advocate Supreme Court Pakistan)

but several Pakistani and international press freedom groups have documented journalists who faced bans,
YouTube channel blocks, in-absentia convictions, or TV airtime bans under the current Shehbaz Sharif-led govt 2024-2026.

Based on CPJ, IFJ, Reuters, and Pakistan Press Foundation reports 2025-2026, here are the names most frequently cited:

1- Journalists sentenced in absentia / declared "absconders" - Jan 2, 2026*
An Islamabad anti-terrorism court gave 2 life sentences + 35 years each to journalists accused of inciting May 9, 2023 protests:

2. Journalists whose YouTube channels were ordered blocked - June 2025

An Islamabad court/NCCIA requested YouTube block 27 channels for "anti-state propaganda.

Names listed include:
Matiullah Jaan - investigative journalist
Wajahat Khan
Ahmad Noorani_Fact Focus_ investigative site
Asad Ali Toor
Imran Riaz Khan former BOL News anchor
Orya Maqbool Jan
Sabir Shakir
Moeed Pirzada

The ban was suspended July 2025 by a sessions court for lack of due process. 3524

3. TV airtime bans by PEMRA
- *Aug 2023*: PEMRA directed TV channels to stop airtime for 11 people including journalists considered close to Imran Khan PTI

ARY News*: License suspended for broadcasting Imran Khan speeches C-296

4. Recently detained/arrested journalists 2025-2026

Sohrab Barkat arrested June 5, 2026 by NCCIA over YouTube reporting on Kashmir protests

Matiullah Jan indicted Oct 31, 2025 on Anti-Terrorism Act + narcotics charges, which HRW called “politically motivated”

Ahmad Noorani* - FIR by FIA for tax documents leak,

Context.
1. *Legal basis*: Most actions use 2025 PECA amendments criminalizing “fake/false information” online and Anti-Terrorism Act.
2. *“New regime”*: Reports attribute the crackdown to PM Shehbaz Sharif’s government post-Feb 2024 elections. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi pledged crackdown on “fake news” including overseas journalists Dec 2025.
3. *Press freedom groups*: CPJ called it “retaliation against critical reporting”. IFJ 2025-26 report called it “systemic crackdown and existential crisis for media.
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IMPORTANT ..!
Many of these journalists deny charges and say proceedings were _in absentia_ without summons. “Banned” here means channel blocks, TV airtime bans, arrest warrants, or in-absentia convictions — not all are jailed inside Pakistan.
Said : Aurangzeb Akbar
(Investigative journalist , Ambassador for Peace)
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Article online:
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Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Aurangzeb Akbar / Azhar Siddique

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:
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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619