

Rights Groups Demand Protection for Afghan Journalists

August 17, 2025

— Categories: Human Rights



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Fifty human rights organizations have issued a joint call urging urgent international action to protect Afghan journalists living in Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. The statement, released this week, warned that reporters who fled Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover face harassment, detention, and the constant threat of deportation.

The groups condemned the ongoing forced deportations of Afghan journalists, arguing that such actions violate international obligations to protect refugees and vulnerable migrants. They emphasized that freedom of the press is being severely undermined as journalists remain exposed to state repression across neighboring countries.

According to the joint appeal, many Afghan journalists who fled the country after August 2021 did so to escape targeted persecution under Taliban rule. However, in Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, they are now subject to arrests, police raids, and pressure to return to Afghanistan.

“Sending journalists back to a country where they face near-certain persecution is a violation of basic human rights and international law,” the statement read. The groups stressed that forced deportations risk silencing the independent press that once operated in Afghanistan, leaving the global community with fewer reliable voices from the region.

The coalition of rights groups urged host governments to halt deportations immediately and to review the cases of Afghan journalists who have applied for asylum or temporary protection. They also appealed for coordinated international relocation programs, encouraging Western countries and humanitarian agencies to provide emergency resettlement pathways.

The statement further called on the United Nations to establish a dedicated emergency mechanism to support Afghan journalists in Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. Without such measures, the groups warned, many reporters will remain trapped in unsafe conditions with no legal protections.

Human rights activists highlighted that the international community’s failure to act would amount to a betrayal of both press freedom and human dignity. They urged journalist-support networks worldwide to document ongoing violations and to raise awareness of the risks these journalists continue to face.

Since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, press freedoms in Afghanistan have sharply declined. Reporters who criticized authorities, particularly women journalists, faced intimidation, arbitrary detention, and threats to their families. Many fled across borders seeking safety, only to encounter fresh dangers in host countries.

Rights advocates argue that the treatment of Afghan journalists is a test of global commitment to defending free expression. If governments allow deportations to continue, they warn, not only will the lives of these journalists be endangered, but a vital source of independent reporting on Afghanistan will be lost.

The joint appeal reflects a broader concern that international mechanisms for protecting journalists remain inadequate. While support campaigns have emerged, rights groups say the response must move beyond statements and toward concrete relocation and protection programs.

As the situation stands, Afghan journalists in Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey continue to live under the threat of forced return. Human rights organizations maintain that urgent action is needed to uphold international commitments, safeguard press freedom, and protect individuals whose work is vital for global awareness of conditions inside Afghanistan.