

A coordinated drive of blocking, intimidation, harassment and detention of journalists has taken place in Punjab since March 19, 2023. A detailed account of this drive was prepared and sent to the Press Club of India on the request of its president Umakant Lakhera.

Here are details:-

(A) Blocking & Restrictions:

Freedom of Expression is everybody's rights as declared by Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also enshrined in the Constitution of India. Free and independent press/media is considered as a pillar of democracy. In Punjab this pillar is under attack as social media profiles of many journalists are blocked without notice. Many news channels have also been blocked with any notice. Here are details:-

Since March 19, 2023 Twitter/Facebook of following journalists and media houses are blocked:-

(1) Twitter handle of Kamaldeep Singh Brar (a senior correspondent of The Indian Express from Amritsar) is blocked without notice. Handle @kamalsinghbrar

(2) A Tweet thread by Pallavi Pundir who works with USA based international news media house VICE, is blocked in India. This tweet thread was about a report reported by Pallavi Pundir regarding ongoing events in Punjab. The report is published in VICE. Handle @pallavipundir

(3) Twitter handle of Gagandeep Singh a prominent Punjabi web channel journalist who has also worked with media houses like NewsX, Zee Punjab Haryana Himachal, Indian News Punjab, tvPunjab is blocked without notice. Handle @Gagan4344

(4) Twitter handle of freelance journalist Sandeep Singh whose reports appear in media platforms like Article 14, The Quint, The Wire and Gaon Connection is also blocked. Notably, Sandeep Singh was National Foundation for Indian (NFI) fellow for 2021. Handle @PunYaab

(5) Twitter handle of another freelance journalist Juzar Singh is also blocked without notice. Handle @juzar_singh

(6) Twitter handle of founder and editor of Sikh Siyasat News is also blocked without notice. Handle @psgazi

(7) Facebook page of a prominent Punjabi Channel "**Punjabi Lok**" with more than a million subscribers is blocked without notice.

(8) Facebook page of **Punjabi Lok** channel's journalist **Jagdeep Singh Thali** who is a well known face in Punjab's media circles is blocked without notice.

(9) The Facebook page of **Samrath Awaaz** channel is also blocked without notice.

(10) Facebook Page of **Simranjit Singh Kotkपुरa** who works with a prominent Punjabi web channel and is a known face in TV journalism in Punjab, has been withheld in India.

Please note except in the case of Pallavi Pundir, Government of India has imposed 'blind and blanket' blocking on social media handles of channels and journalists. In Pallavi Pundir's case only one tweet thread is blocked but in the rest of cases handles and pages are blocked including information which was officially released by authorities themselves.

(B) Summoning, police raids and detentions of journalists:

Earlier police started summoning journalists to police stations. But for the past two days they have started conducting raids to detain journalists. Here are available details:-

(1) Punjab police picked up reporter **Jasvir Singh** from his house in Mukatsar on March 19. He was told to refrain from reporting or posting on social media. He was taken to the police station. His and his wife's phone was seized by the police. He was told to refrain from reporting.

(2) Journalist **Juzar Singh**, who is also a fellow at Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar, was also summoned by police at a local police station. Police released him after making him sign a written undertaking that he shall refrain from posting on social media.

(3) **Harpal Singh Makhu** of **Akaal Channel**, a UK based Punjabi satellite channel with over million subscribers of YouTube and Facebook, was **arrested** and detained while he was covering a peaceful demonstration at Harike.

(4) On 24 March 2023 at around 5:30 am a police party belonging to police post Kot Dharmu raided the parental house of **The Khalas TV** director **Harsharan Kaur** in village Chhapianwali in Mansa district to detain her. She was not there. Police told the family to ask Harsharan Kaur to appear at the police station at the earliest. Family members asked for any warrant or summon but police did not show any.

(5) **Jagjit Singh Panjoli** is a journalist with Punjabi web channel, **The Unmute**. He has worked with **The Global Punjab TV** also. Punjab police had come to Panjoli's house on 24 March at village Panjoli Kalan of Fatehgarh Sahib. He was not at his house at that time.

(6) Police have also raided the house of **Rattandeep Singh Dhaliwal**, CEO of **Talk with Rattan** is another Punjabi journalist whose house was raided by Punjab Police. According to Rattan, Police officials who came to his home, from family members to land ownership gathered all information about the family including information about extended family. Rattandeep Singh Dhaliwal was reporting authentically on ongoing events in Punjab.

(7) Police have also raided the house of **Ranbir Singh Rana**, deputy editor of **News18 Punjab**, for being in touch with Amritpal Singh's aide for media purposes. Police from Bassi Pathana Police Station visited Rana's house in Fatehgarh Sahib area and enquired about him from his villagers as he was not in the village.

We expect the Journalistic fraternity and Press Club of India to take notice of blocking, intimidation, harassment and detention of journalists in Punjab, and to issue appropriate responses asking appropriate authorities/governments to end the cycle of 'blind and blanket' blocking, intimidation, harassment and detention of journalists in Punjab.

Compiled and Released by —

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- Simranjeet Singh Kotkapura, Reporter & Writer.
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25 March 2023