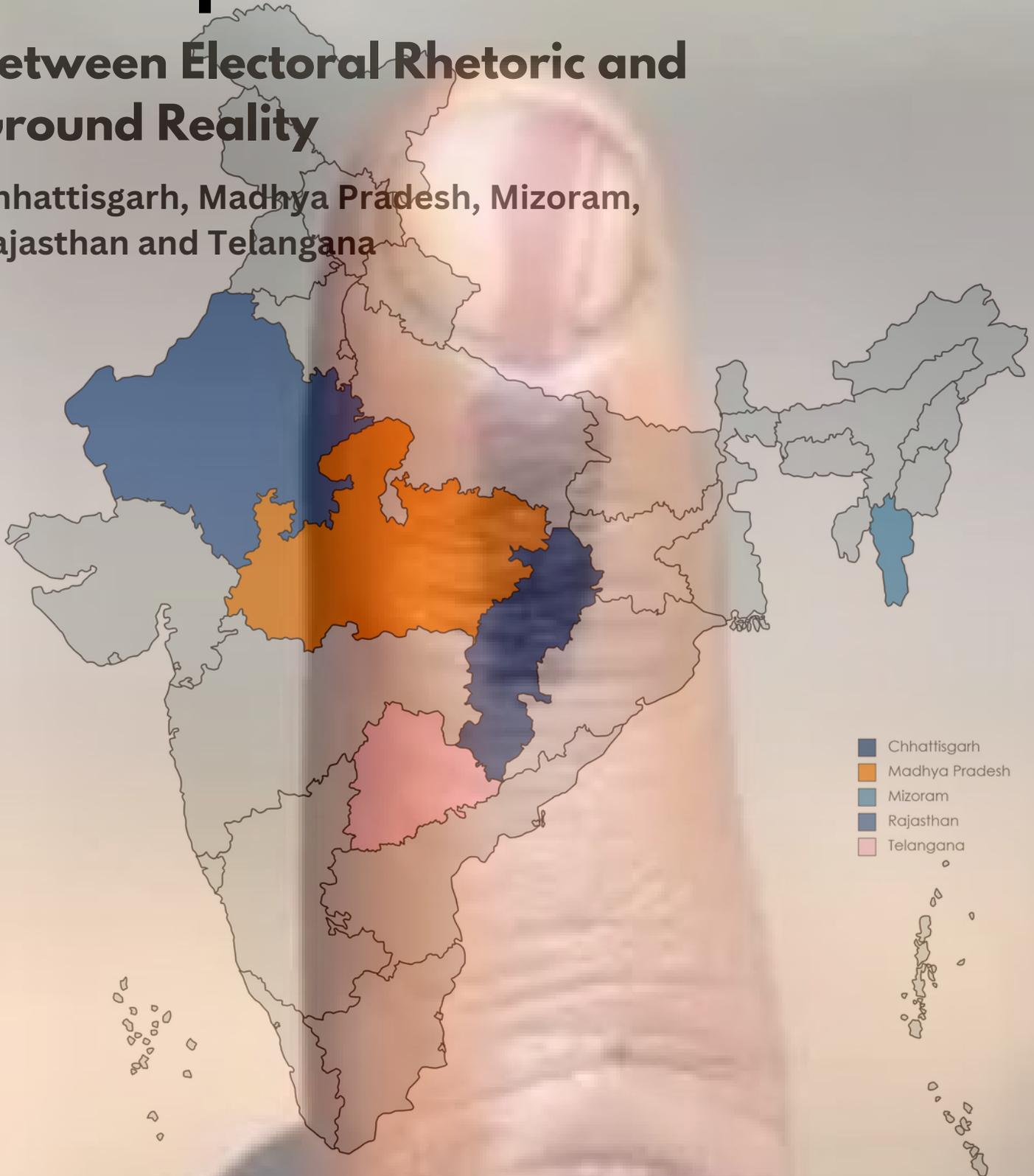


Free Speech In The States

Between Electoral Rhetoric and Ground Reality

Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Telangana



A Free Speech Collective Report
6 November 2023

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From 7 November 2023, five state assemblies go to the polls - Chhattisgarh, in two phases, on 7 November and 17; Mizoram on 7 November; Madhya Pradesh on 17 November; Rajasthan on 23 November and Telangana on 30 November. While voters are faced with a myriad of issues, including unemployment, corruption, health care, safety of women, displacement due to infrastructure projects, farm loans and pensions, there are grave silences over accountability and transparency in governance.

Over the last five years, journalists and RTI activists in these states have been killed, arrested and attacked for their work. Censorship was an abiding feature, either due to government policy or through the weapon of 'lawfare', as journalists were slapped with cases ranging from sedition to defamation, causing disharmony and enmity, often struggling with multiple FIRs registered in different police stations.

As the arrest and over two-month long incarceration of reporter Jaalam Singh, charged with seven FIRs in Guna and Shivpuri districts in Madhya Pradesh indicates, such repressive action has had a chilling effect on journalism. If on the one hand, there is acute self-censorship, on the other, there is a woeful absence of the critical questioning that would otherwise be the hallmark of investigative journalism. In both scenarios, the net result is deliberate silencing.

As Suman Kirar, Jaalam Singh's wife said bitterly, "Instead of questioning and protesting the arrest of a colleague, all these 'positive' stories are being published. A journalist who refused to take money or remain silent is still in jail."

The term of the outgoing state assemblies was also marked by the Covid-19 pandemic and shutdown from March 24, 2020. There is already extensive documentation on the restrictions on the media during the unprecedented nation-wide lockdown. In Madhya Pradesh, the scare over the virus resulted in [suspension](#) of print media publications in 95 per cent of the state's districts.

But journalists faced the brunt of covering the pandemic. In Telangana, under review as one of the five states that goes to the polls, bulldozer policing was used to devastating effect on May 22, 2020 to raze to the ground the residence of V6 News Channel journalist Shanigarapu Parameshwar, who reported on the birthday party of MLA Mahareddy Bhupal Reddy with 500 supporters in violation of the lockdown in Narayankhed, Telangana.

While Chhattisgarh was one of the few states which offered financial assistance of Rs 500,000 to dependents of media persons who died due to Covid-19 under the Media Representative Welfare Assistance Rules, journalists in this state faced the brunt of 'lawfare', being charged under multiple sections of the law for reporting on sand mining and other corruption at local levels.

Despite government assurances and the passage of a media protection law, journalists on the ground were vulnerable to false cases. In Surguja division alone, which comprises six districts, 22 journalists have faced the brunt for their reporting, most of whom have been arrested or have had cases slapped against them. arrested. Take the case of Sunil Namdev, who runs a YouTube channel News Today. Reporting on Covid violations by the ruling party members; corruption in construction; the arrest of senior IAS officers who colluded with the Congress government in the coal mafia scam, promptly landed him in jail, where he still is lodged since May 2023. Jitendra Jaiswal, a journalist from Ambikapur who runs a digital news platform, Bharat Samman has 12 cases against him - one during the 15-year-old BJP rule and the rest in the last five years of Congress rule. Jaiswal has recently been given a notice of 'jilla badal' (externment) placing him under the list of 'gunda-badmash' (gangster).

Internet shutdowns are normalised, despite the immense resultant disruption in peoples' lives. Shutdowns were implemented ignoring the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court of India in the Anuradha Bhasin case. In Rajasthan alone, of the five states under review, the Internet was shut down on a whopping 72 occasions recorded by the FSC State Index, a majority of which were to clamp down on protests.

In Mizoram, access to information has been the biggest challenge and journalists' bodies have been hampered by attempts by the government and border security forces to restrict their movements and regulate permission for news coverage in border areas. Mizoram, which goes to the polls on November 7, shares a border with Manipur and its government has come out in support of the Kuki-Zo community in the wake of the ongoing conflict in Manipur. Its government has stated that it will ignore the Union home ministry's order to

collect biometric data of refugees from bordering Myanmar who have crossed the international border to flee from the junta.

Right to Information (RTI) activists also faced curbs on the right to free speech, and were vulnerable to murderous attacks. In a chilling case against an RTI activist and retired Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO) in Telangana, 70-year-old RTI activist Nalla Ramakrishnaiah was killed in Jangaon district and his body dumped in a water-filled quarry after he complained about irregularities by the accused, G Anjaiah, in a land issue.

Overall, there has been a steady deterioration of freedom of expression in India and there is overwhelming evidence of journalists killed, attacked, arrested, charged for their investigative work, intimidated or denied access to the gathering of news and information in the public interest or bluntly censored and silenced. India fares badly in global indices of press freedom organisations. India has slipped to 161 in rankings of the World Press Freedom Index maintained by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and ranks 11th on Global Impunity Index 2022 of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

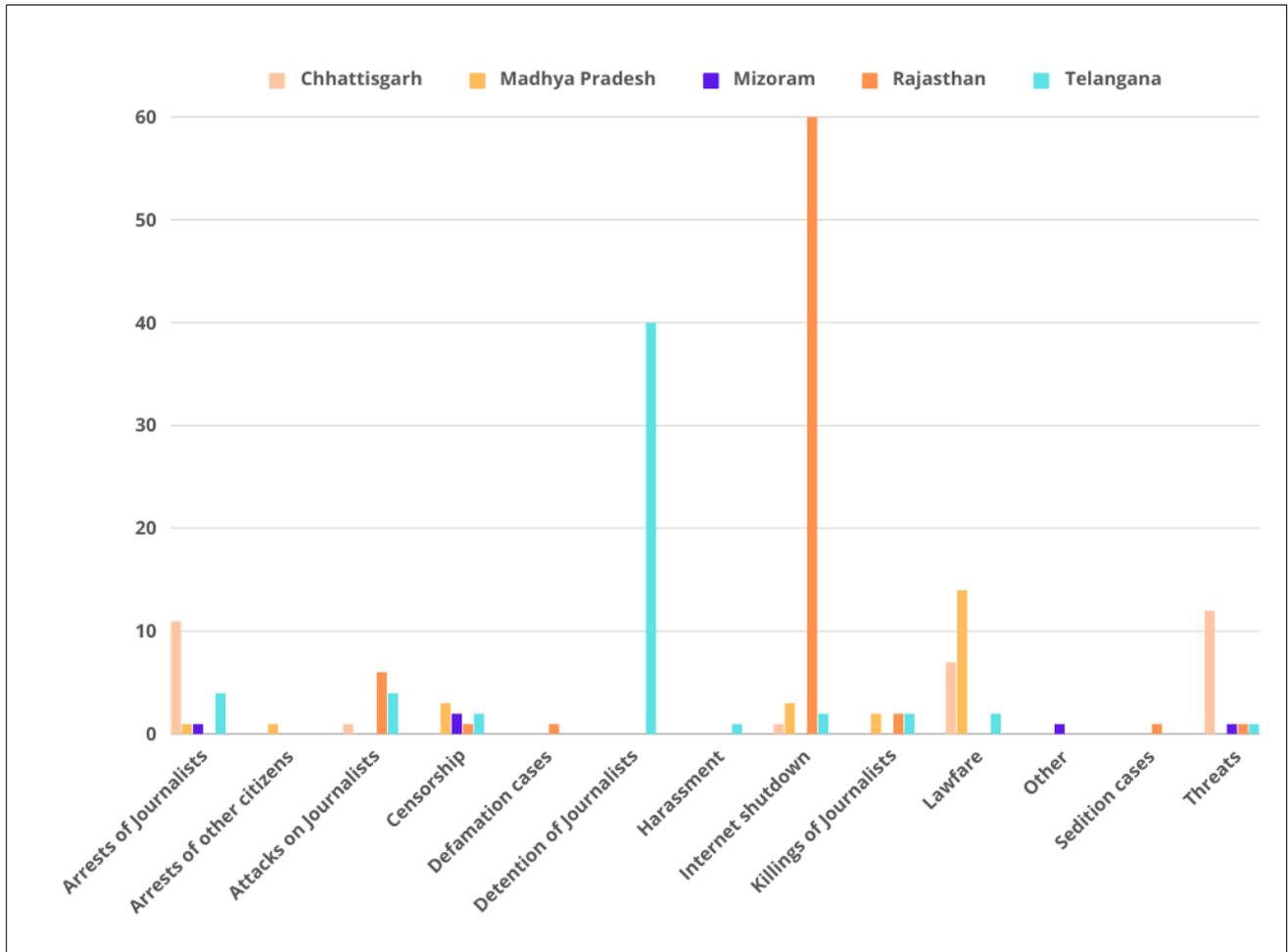
Ironically, even as hate speech is given full rein (for e.g., the wave of communal speeches and clashes in Ujjain, Mandasaur and Indore districts of Madhya Pradesh between December 2020-January 2021), there are increasing restrictions and regulations of freedom of expression not just for the news media. Artists, academics, stand-up comedians, writers, filmmakers, citizens and intellectuals who use social media or speak at public meetings and discussions have found themselves arrested or face criminal charges. Slowly but surely, the space for dissent is shrinking and independent voices are being silenced or penalised.

As the five states go to the polls, it is worth noting that the Indian National Congress in its 2019 [manifesto](#) on “Media and Press Freedom” promises reform in regulatory bodies to tackle paid news, disinformation and media monopolies, and promises to work with state governments to protect journalists working in conflict areas or those investigating matters of public interest. Free speech is not a specific poll issue in the manifesto of any of the other political parties.

In this context, this report on **‘Free Speech In The States’** seeks to examine the health of freedom of expression in the five states that go to the polls.

(See Annexure for details of incidents.)

Free Speech in the States (2018–2023)



About Free Speech in the States

Free Speech in the States is a state-wise monitor of freedom of expression in India by the Free Speech Collective (FSC), comprising data on the number and nature of instances of free speech violations, cases, perpetrators and the mechanisms for justice delivery (or the lack of it) and an analysis of the state of free speech in the states of India.

This study of the five states going in for elections to the State Assemblies - Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Telangana - examined press freedom violations as well as free speech issues in other areas for the five-year term of the governments in these states. The categories recorded were: Killings of journalists; arrests; detentions; deportation; arrest of other citizens; attacks on journalists; threats; censorship, Internet shutdowns, cases of defamation, sedition and contempt of court, clubbed under the term 'lawfare' to indicate overuse and misuse of laws to silence dissent). The report records cases, police investigations and action and court cases and judgements in this period. It includes news reports, monitoring of existing cases, interviews with key stakeholders along with a brief contextual background into each state and a brief summary of laws affecting freedom of expression.

Team

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Grateful acknowledgements

- Assistance with data input, Shabari Rao.
- Ground level inputs and analysis from journalists and human rights activists in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, and Telangana.

While every effort has been made to document and verify all instances, please do write to freespeechcollectiveindia@gmail.com if any incidents or instances warrant inclusion or amendments.

CHHATTISGARH: Between Armed Conflict and Corporate Loot

Over the last five years, as per data available with Free Speech Collective, the scourge of “lawfare” resulted in the arrest of 11 journalists, some of them more than once and the lodging of cases against seven journalists. At least 12 journalists faced intimidation and threats of cases being registered against them.

Brief Context

Chhattisgarh, in Central India, goes to the Assembly polls in two phases - on Nov 7 and 17. Formed in 2000 out of Madhya Pradesh, the state is currently governed by the Indian National Congress led by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, which won 68 seats in the 2018 elections, defeating the BJP’s Raman Singh government, which ruled the state for 15 years from 2003.

Chhattisgarh is the ninth largest state in India in terms of area and has a population of over 30 million people, around 32 per cent of which is tribal. Of its 90 assembly seats, 29 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes and 10 for Scheduled caste. Around 70 per cent of its population is engaged in agriculture. The state that has 45 per cent deciduous forest cover is equally rich in mineral wealth, holding the country’s third largest coal reserves. Other mineral resources include iron ore, bauxite, dolomite, tin ore and others.

Although rich in minerals, over 40 per cent of the State population has been recorded as “poor” as per the C Rangarajan Report. The current government’s claim that over 40 lakh people have come out of poverty are yet to be scientifically established.

Chhattisgarh ranks 10 out of 19 large states in the Niti-Aayog health index 2021 and has a literacy rate of around 70 per cent but educational infrastructure is low. Malnutrition in tribal districts is high, according to a report by the state’s Women and Child Commission, though the state’s overall malnutrition rate had declined from 23.37 % in 2019 to 17.76% in 2022.

While Dainik Bhaskar, Deshbandhu, Hari Bhooma, Patrika and NavBharat are leading print publications in Chhattisgarh, electronic media channels like TV9, Zee MP&CG, IBC 24, News18 MP&CG, Sadhana News,INH 24x7, India News, Swaraj Express, News 24MP&CG, News Hour, TV24, and several others, In addition, a host of YouTube

channels, including the recently launched Chhattisgarh Tak channel from the India Today group, compete for government advertising and revenue. English dailies such as the Indian Express, The New Indian Express, The Hindu, The Times of India, Hitavada and others have regular correspondents covering news from the State.

The last couple of years have witnessed the emergence of a wide range of independently run digital platforms and You Tube channels covering block level news in different parts of the state.

Given the over three-decade old armed conflict between the State and the banned CPI(Maoist) party, especially in the state's southern districts of Bastar region, gathering news is a herculean task for regional reporters often making news reporting difficult and precarious. That apart, news reporting has increasingly become difficult for local reporters even in areas that are not challenged by the armed conflict. With mainstream media shrinking its role in upholding free press, the mushrooming digital news platforms and YouTube channels aggressively compete for 'breaking news'. There is an enhanced number of cases filed against the reporters at the drop a hat, engaging them in legal battles over their reports directly or indirectly. All of which leaves Chhattisgarh with an abysmally low level of press freedom.

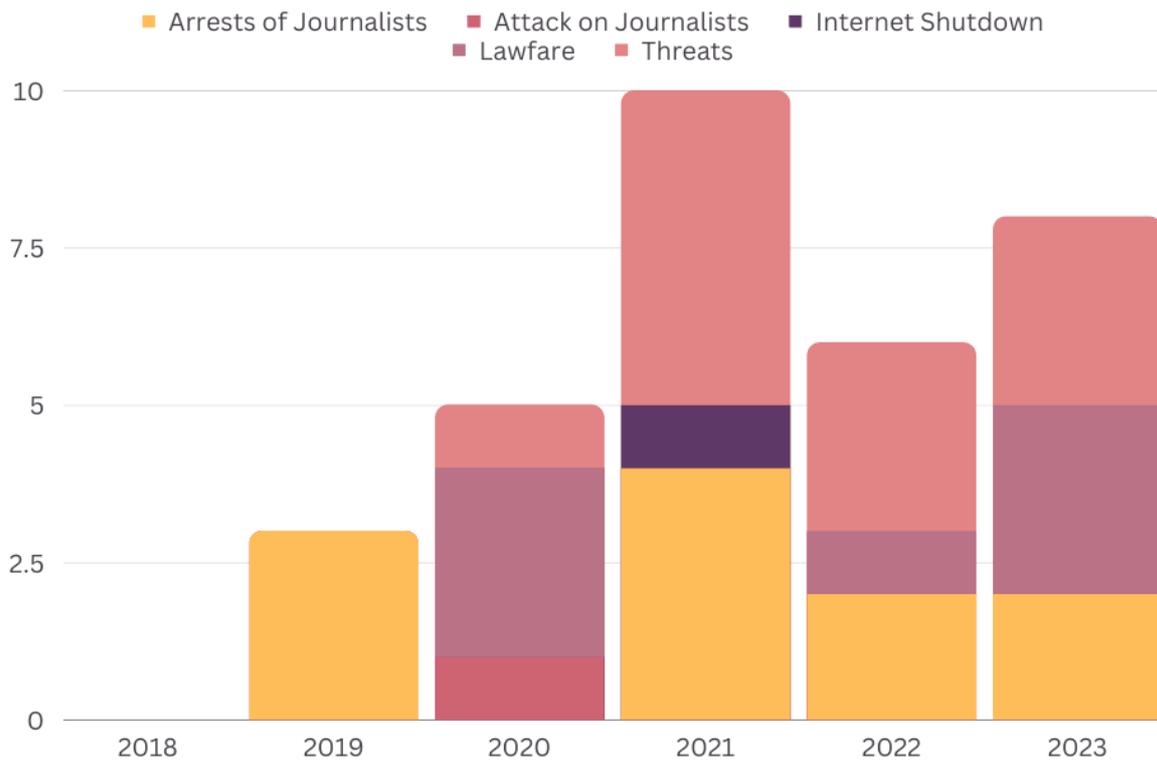
As promised in its 2018 Election Manifesto, the Bhupesh Baghel government passed a Bill in the assembly on March 22, 2023 to ensure legal protection for journalists called the Chhattisgarh Media Personnel Security Bill-2023. However, not only is the government, according to local journalists, guilty of diluting the rich consultations held over a year with journalists across the State, but the weak Bill shows little promise of upholding press freedom and the rights of journalists to report fearlessly.

A Snapshot of Free Speech in Chhattisgarh, 2018-2023

Recorded Incidents: 32

Categories	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
Arrests of Journalists		3		4	2	2	11
Attacks on Journalists			1				1
Internet shutdown				1			1
Lawfare			3		1	3	7
Threats			1	5	3	3	12
TOTAL	0	3	5	7	4	6	32

CHHATTISGARH (2018-2023)



<https://freespeechcollective.in/>

MADHYA PRADESH : Censorship, Clampdowns and Intolerance of Dissent

Over the last five years, as per data available with Free Speech Collective, there were 24 incidents of free speech violations recorded in Madhya Pradesh. Apart from the killing of two journalists (Chakresh Jain and Sunil Tiwari), the arrests of journalists, stand-up comedian Munawar Faruqui and five members of his team, there were 12 instances of “lawfare” against the media. Madhya Pradesh also became a laboratory of sorts for academic censorship with the monitoring of prescribed books, classroom teaching and the targeting of teachers of a minority community, as exemplified but the case against Dr Farhat Khan in Indore.

Brief Context

The central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh goes to the polls on November 17, 2023 to elect 230 members of the state Legislative Assembly currently ruled by a BJP government under Shivraj Singh Chouhan who assumed office in 2020. Post the elections in December 2018, the Indian National Congress (INC)’s Kamal Nath became Chief Minister after the INC was elected as the single largest party with 114 seats. However, in March 2020, 22 MLAs from the Congress resigned from the assembly and defected to the BJP, following former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Madhya Pradesh is the fifth largest state in India, with rich natural resources, forests and minerals. Of its population of over 80 million, nearly three-fourths (73 per cent) of the households are in rural areas. The literacy rate, at 69.3 per cent is lower than the national average of 73 per cent (2011 Census figures), education and job opportunities remain low. High unemployment and malnutrition continue to persist.

Prominent Hindi newspapers, including Dainik Bhaskar, Nai Duniya, Dainik Jagran and Navbharat and English newspapers The Hitavada, Central Chronicle and The Times of India are published from Madhya Pradesh. While NDTV launched its NDTV Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh channel in August this year, there are prominent local satellite channels ETV Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh, Sahara Madhya Pradesh, Sadhana News and pan-India channels.

On September 7, 2023, in a barely disguised attempt to win over the media, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan proclaimed a slew of welfare schemes for journalists in a patrakar

samagam (journalists' gathering), including enhanced pension for senior journalists, health insurance, loans for housing construction, education loans for children of accredited journalists and the setting up of a committee to formulate a law to protect journalists.

Ironically, on September 13, journalist Jaalam Singh, working with online portal, Dainik Khulasa, was arrested and faces seven First Information Reports (FIRs) after he published a story on a video of state minister of panchayat and rural development Mahendra Singh Sisodia and an unidentified woman.

Singh is still in jail in Guna and his family is struggling to pay the bail amount. The arrest of Jaalam Singh is the most recent in a series of serious free speech violations in Madhya Pradesh. There were other glaring examples, the most glaring being the killing of journalists Chakresh Jain in 2019 and Sunil Tiwari in 2020, the latter having even appealed for police protection after receiving threats but receiving no response.

On January 1, 2021, a stand-up comedian, Munawar Faruqui, was arrested on charges of allegedly insulting Hindu gods and for violating Covid-19 protocol at a New Year event in a cafe in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Weirdly, he didn't even get to crack the allegedly offending joke. Aklavya Laxman Singh Gaur, an activist of the Hindu Rakshak and son of MLA and former Indore mayor Malini Laxman Singh Gaur, filed a complaint against Faruqui and police quickly arrested his associates Edwin Anthony, Prakhar Vyas, Priyam Vyas and another stand-up comedian Nalin Yadav who opened the show.

Madhya Pradesh became the laboratory of sorts for academic censorship with close monitoring of prescribed books, classroom teaching and the targeting of teachers of a minority community. On December 3, 2022, police in Bhawarkuan, Indore, lodged an FIR against Dr Farhat Khan, author of the book titled 'Collective Violence and Criminal Justice System', on the directions of the state Home Minister Narottam Mishra after the local BJP-affiliated student body the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) alleged that the book contained "objectionable" content against Hindus and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Dr Khan was arrested on December 8, 2022, on charges of promoting enmity between different groups and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings.

Mishra, who is also the state government's official spokesperson, had, in November 2021, taken umbrage at satirist Vir Das's Youtube video video entitled "I come from two Indias" and threatened to prevent him from performing in the state. Mishra had earlier raised objections about advertisements on a same sex couple performing the hindu ritual 'karva chauth' and another on a jewellery designer's allegedly obscene portrayal of a mangalsutra.

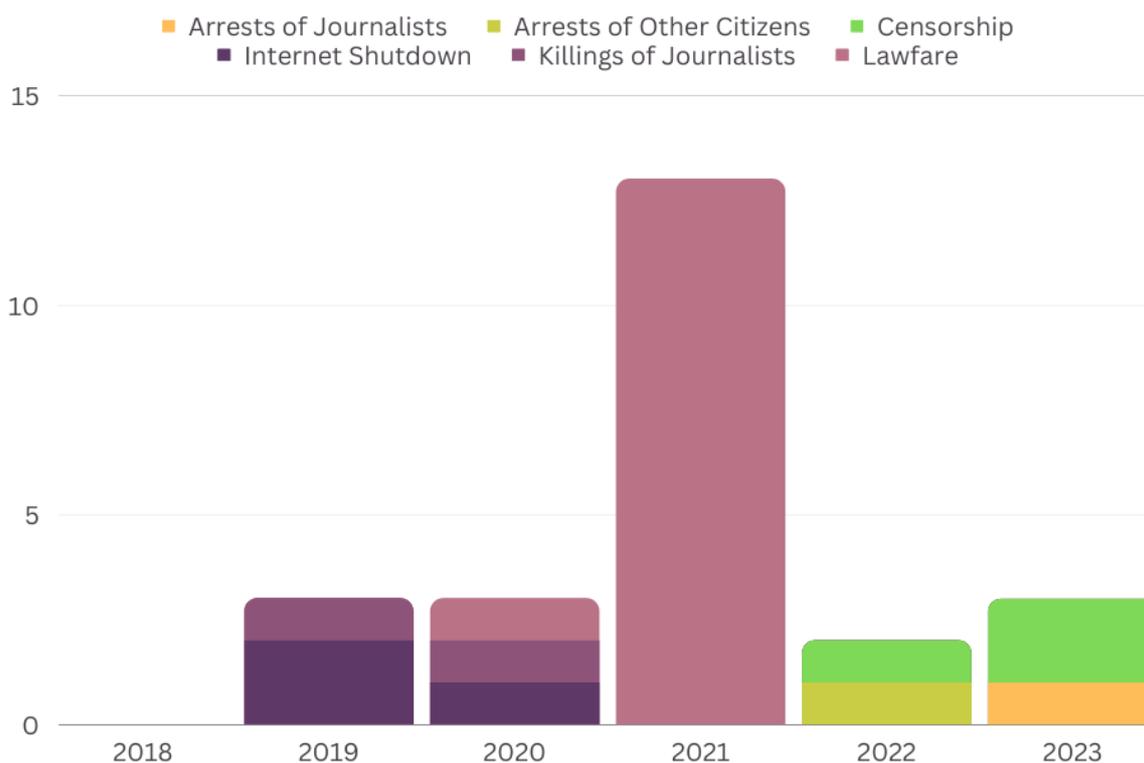
With guns trained on content on OTT platforms, between November 2020 and March 2021, six FIRs were registered against directors and producers of Netflix (for allegedly hurting religious sentiments in the web series 'A Suitable Boy') and five FIRs registered in different cities against Amazon Prime (for the web series 'Tandav'). In March 2021, the Madhya Pradesh government announced that it will seek the right to take criminal action against web series for obscene and controversial content under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and passed a resolution to this effect in the state Assembly.

Adivasis face the brunt of "development projects" and the resultant displacement and deforestation. The denial of protection under the Forest Rights Act has sparked protests from tribal rights organisations. Inevitably, the backlash followed. Activists of the Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan (JADS) were charged for violating prohibitory orders and an activist, Madhuri Krishnaswami, was issued a *jila badar* (externment) notice by the district magistrate of Burhanpur district on May 16, 2023. Externment notices against targeted activists, also have a chilling effect overall and end up silencing legitimate protest.

A Snapshot of Free Speech in Madhya Pradesh, 2018-2023 Recorded Incidents: 24

Categories	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
Arrests of Journalists						1	1
Arrests of other citizens					1		1
Censorship					1	2	3
Internet shutdown		2	1				3
Killings of Journalists		1	1				2
Lawfare			1	13			14
TOTAL	0	3	3	13	2	3	24

MADHYA PRADESH (2018-2023)



<https://freespeechcollective.in/>

MIZORAM: Borders, Refugees and Ethnic Equations

Over the last five years, as per data available with Free Speech Collective, one journalist was attacked, another was threatened and two faced censorship. According to local journalists who sought anonymity, self-censorship had become a norm and divisions on political lines within the media has also not helped the cause of press freedom.

Brief Context

Mizoram, which attained statehood in 1987, has a population of about 11 lakh, predominantly tribal and Christian. It shares international borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar, making it a transit point for trade, and sensitive to border issues, security and defence concerns. Reporting on issues close to the border – controlled by the Border Security Force – has been a point of contention for the media.

The movement of people across borders and crossing over of refugees from neighbouring countries into the state has not been a point of huge contention, with top leaders supportive of the refugees. There are an estimated 33,000 Chin people from Myanmar and 800 Kuki-Chin people from Bangladesh, both these groups being ethnically close to the Mizo people. A major stream of refugees from Myanmar arrived in Mizoram in March 2021 following the military coup and ouster of the elected government under Aung San Suu Kyi. An [extraordinary outpouring](#) of support from civil society, church-based groups and the state government has made the refugees feel welcome.

Between 2013-2018, the state was ruled by the Indian National Congress which won 34 out of 40 seats, while [Mizo National Front](#) and [Mizoram People's Conference](#) won five seats and one seat respectively.

In the 2018 elections, Mizo National Front (MNF) bagged 26 seats with a vote share of 37.8 per cent. Congress secured five seats and BJP won one seat. The MNF is an ally of the BJP-led NDA and the anti-Congress NEDA (Northeast Democratic Alliance).

Since the ethnic conflict began in May 2023 in neighbouring Manipur, about 12,000 Kuki-Zomi people have taken [refuge](#) in Mizoram. The refugee issue is a major topic in the upcoming assembly election. On October 25, Chief Minister Zoramthanga, president of the MNF, announced that his party will [not collaborate](#) with the BJP in the upcoming elections, due to the anti-Christian violence and destruction of churches in BJP-ruled Manipur.

With a literacy rate of 91.33 per cent, there is a vibrant media culture in the state. There are about 40 registered newspapers in the state, including Mizo Aw, Romei, Mizo Arsi, Dingdi, Newslink, Thupuan, Rahbi, Vanglaini, Aizawl Post, Hnehtu, Highlander. Of these, Highlander and Newslink are published in English. Most media outlets are dependent on the government for advertisement revenue, most of which is **concentrated** in the capital Aizawl, the seat of political power. State **patronage** via the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DI&PR) is an affliction in Mizoram, like many other small states without an independent media ecosystem. In such a situation, self-censorship is likely to be prevalent.

Lalbiakthanga Pachuau, 96, who has run his newspaper Zoram Tlangau since 1970, 'was declared as the **oldest working journalist** in India by the Mizoram Journalist Association. He was awarded the Padma Shri on 8 November 2021.

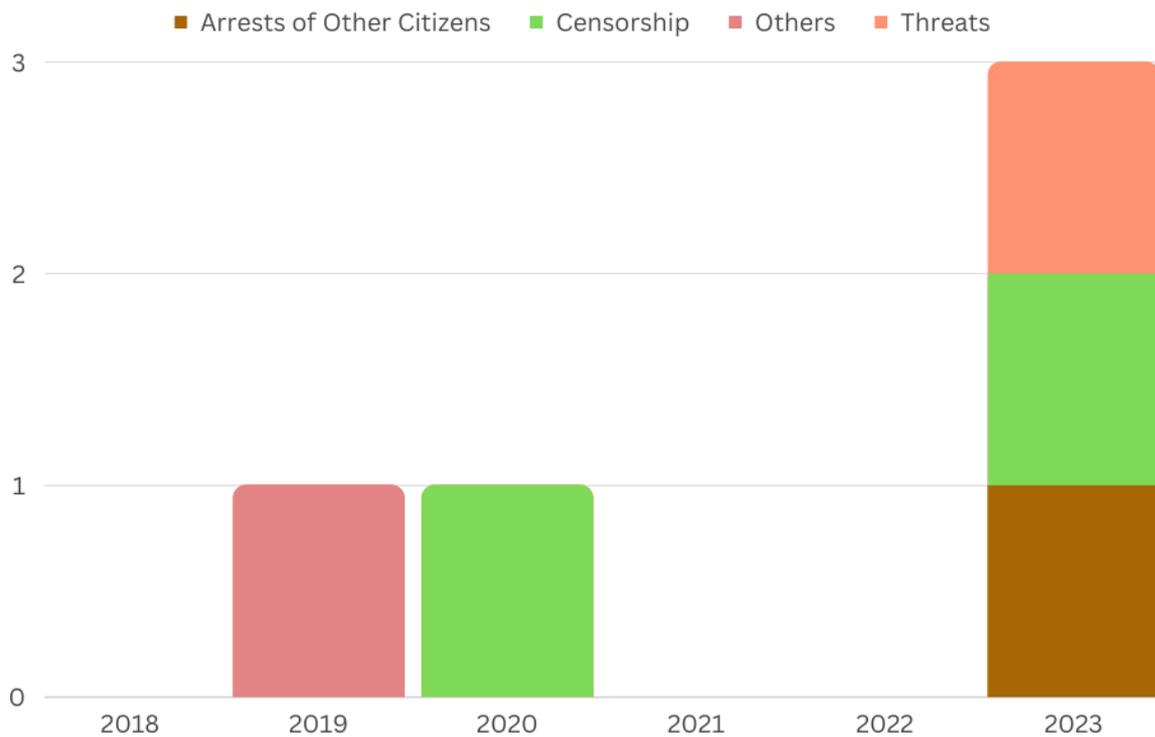
The Mizoram Journalist Association, started in 1973, now has 193 members across 11 districts of the state. Only 9 are women, making up around 4 per cent. In 1995, Lalsangluaii Sailo became the first woman member of MJA and went on to become the only woman to have been an executive member of the MJA. Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga in March 2022 announced a [pension scheme](#) for journalists of the state.

Besides the ethnic conflict, the long-standing border dispute between Mizoram and Assam and the movement of drugs into the state is likely to [dominate the polls](#). In 2021, [violent clashes](#) at the border in Kolasib district of Mizoram resulted in the death of six police personnel and one civilian. A woman journalist was also injured while covering the clash.

A Snapshot of Free Speech in Mizoram, 2018-2023 Recorded Incidents: 5

Categories	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
Attacks on Journalists	1						1
Censorship			1			1	2
Other		1					1
Threats						1	1
TOTAL	1	1	1	0	0	3	5

MIZORAM (2018-2023)



<https://freespeechcollective.in/>

RAJASTHAN: Precarious Balancing Act

Over the last five years, as per data available with Free Speech Collective, there were two killings of RTI activists (Jagdish Goliya and Rai Singh Gurjar) while six others were attacked. Of the total of 72 incidents of free speech violations, sixty were of internet shutdowns - amongst the largest in the country.

Brief Context

With a population of an estimated 8 crore, the state is dominated by Brahmin, Jat and Rajput castes, with OBCs like the Gujjars, tribal communities like Meena and Bhil playing a [significant role](#) the caste equations during the contest for the 200 Assembly seats. The literacy rate of the state is around 66 per cent.

Since the past three decades, the BJP and the Congress have [taken turns](#) to rule the state. In these 30 years, Ashok Gehlot (Congress) has been the chief minister thrice, Vasundhara Raje (BJP) twice and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat (BJP) once. Following Congress rule under Ashok Gehlot in 2008, the BJP returned by a huge margin, and Vasundhara Raje became the Chief Minister for second time.

It was under Vasundhara Raje that the Criminal Laws (Rajasthan Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 ("the Ordinance") was promulgated on 6 September 2017. The Ordinance prevents a magistrate from directing registration of an FIR against magistrates, judges and public servants under Section 156(3) CrPC without prior sanction of the government. The Ordinance also restrains the print and electronic media from reportage of names of the accused public servants, dealing a blow to press freedom, transparency in governance and accountability. The PUCL [termed](#) it "a sinister attempt of the Government of Rajasthan to abridge the fundamental right of speech and expression guaranteed under the Indian Constitution and to thwart the citizens right to access criminal justice system in cases of complaints against abuse of law by public servants." The Ordinance [lapsed](#) in December, 42 days after it was promulgated.

Intervening in what the public should hear and see was not restricted to the BJP government however. In December 2019, Chief Minister Gehlot went as far as asking the Central Board of Film Certification to note the "[wrong](#)" [portrayal](#) of Maharaja Surajmal in Ashutosh Gowariker's film 'Panipat'. The powerful Jat community in the state were offended by the portrayal of their king during the third Battle of *Panipat* between the Maratha empire and Afghan king Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1761. Two years before, in 2017,

Rajasthan witnessed protests over the portrayal of a Rajput queen in [Padmavat](#), prompting the filmmakers to make revisions in the film.

The Congress returned to power in 2018 with a large majority. Whether the Congress bucks the pattern of anti-incumbency and overcomes internal leadership tussles between chief minister Ashok Gehlot and deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot, depends on whether the proposed welfare schemes hold more appeal than the disgruntlement with MLAs at the local level.

Leak of examination papers for the Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC) snowballed into a major embarrassment for the government, as it was also indicative of the massive unemployment in the state. Communal conflict, always at risk of escalation, has emerged as another poll issue, following the brutal beheading in June 2022, of [Kanhaiya Lal](#), a tailor in Udaipur, allegedly on religious lines.

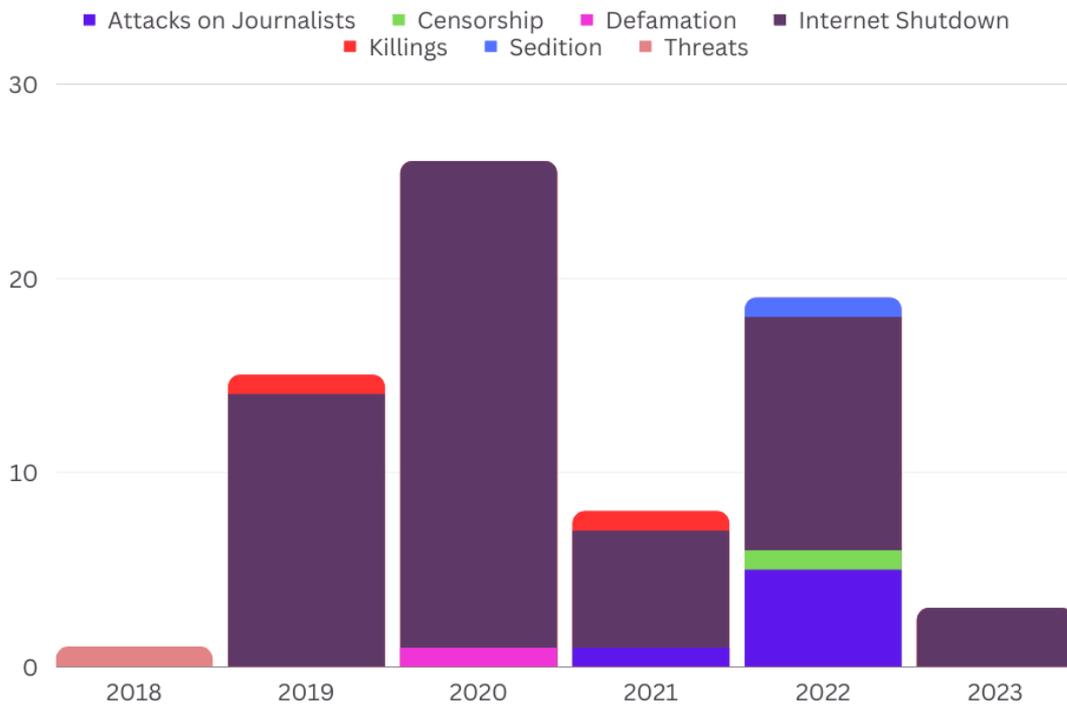
Women's safety and law order is another concern at this time. In 2018, according to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Rajasthan was fifth among states in crimes against women, in a list topped by BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh. After 2019, Rajasthan shot up to second spot, and retained it in 2020 and 2021. The numbers have, however, been [attributed](#) not necessarily to increased violence but more due to a great degree to the mandatory registration of FIRs, a measure introduced by Gehlot after the much publicised gang-rape of a Dalit woman in Thanagazi in 2019 amidst the Lok Sabha polls.

[Internet shutdowns](#) have been a preferred tool of the Gehlot government to prevent cheating during examinations, among other reasons. Rajasthan was one of five states challenged in a petition filed in September 2022 in the Supreme Court by Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC). The petition argued that this practice of ordering internet shutdowns is an arbitrary exercise of the law, being a misinterpretation of the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017 ('the Rules') and shutdowns issued in this manner are unconstitutional, given the SC's previous ruling that the right to freedom of speech and expression and the right to carry on business using the medium of internet is constitutionally protected.

A Snapshot of Free Speech in Rajasthan, 2018-2023
Recorded Incidents: 72

Categories	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
Attacks on Journalists				1	5		6
Censorship					1		1
Defamation cases			1				1
Internet shutdown		14	25	6	12	3	60
Killings of Journalists		1		1			2
Sedition cases					1		1
Threats	1						1
TOTAL	1	15	26	8	19	3	72

RAJASTHAN (2018-2023)



<https://freespeechcollective.in/>

TELANGANA: Teething Troubles

Over the last five years, as per data available with Free Speech Collective, there were two killings of journalists and RTI activists (Mamidi Karunakar Reddy and Nalla Ramakrishnaiah) while at least four journalists were arrested and three were attacked. In January 2022, in a shocking incident that amounts to mass intimidation of the media, around 40 journalists were detained for 12 hours for their allegedly unfavourable coverage of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi government and chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao.

Brief Context

The state of Telangana came into existence in 2014 following a several decades-long struggle to form a separate state out of Andhra Pradesh. Telangana is the 11th largest state and the seventh largest economy in the country, a leader in the IT and services sector. The economy however, is largely agrarian and also dependent on its rich minerals including coal and diamonds.

According to a 2019 report, the *Key Indicators of Household Social Consumption on Education in India*, Telangana has a literacy rate of 72.8% which is the fourth lowest among large states.

The media scene is dominated by English and Telugu language outlets, with Urdu media also occupying a significant place. Telugu press includes Nava Telangana, Sakshi, Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu and Namaste Telangana newspapers. The prominent English newspapers are Deccan Chronicle, The Times Of India, The Hindu, Telangana Today. Notable Urdu newspapers include Etemaad Daily, The Munsif Daily, and The Siasat Daily catering mostly to the 12 per cent Muslim population of Telangana concentrated in Hyderabad.

The Bharat Rashtra Samiti party (known until October 2022 as the Telangana Rashtra Samiti with its main agenda as the creation of Telangana State with Hyderabad as its capital)) has been in power in the state since its inception.

The TRS, formed in 2001 after a split with the Telugu Desam party, aligned with the Indian National Congress and the United Progressive Alliance for the 2004 polls, withdrawing support in 2006 due to the lack of fulfilling the electoral promise of a separate Telangana. In 2009, TRS formed an alliance with TDP and joined the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) but saw a dismal performance, winning 10 assembly seats (out of 45) and 2 parliament seats (out of 9). The TRS went to the 2014 assembly and Lok Sabha polls

independent of any alliance and won, and again in 2018 with a landslide victory, with its founder K Chandrashekar Rao (widely known as 'KCR') being the first and only chief minister the state has known.

In October 2023, BRS denied **claims** by the BJP that the party wanted to join the NDA after its bad showing in the Greater Hyderabad municipal Elections in December 2020, which saw the BJP increasing its presence in the civic body.

According to data released on June 27, 2023 by the Rights and Risks Analysis Group, an independent Delhi-based think tank, in 2022, a total of 194 journalists including seven women journalists were targeted across India by the State agencies, non-state political actors and criminals, and the armed opposition groups during 2022. Telangana with 40 incidents came second to Jammu and Kashmir with 48. Telangana reported the highest arrest/detention with 40; followed by Uttar Pradesh (6); Jammu and Kashmir (4).

In September 2023, [controversy](#) broke out following the release of the trailer of a 'Razakar', a film about Hyderabad under the Nizam before it acceded to the Union of India. The period drama, depicting alleged excesses of the Razakars against the Hindus, drew the attention of minister KT Ram Rao who alleged that the film would stoke communal tensions and vowed to take up the issue with the Central Board of Film Certification.

The ruling BRS has displayed an intolerance to free speech and clamped down on journalists and others expressing opinions on social media and YouTubers. Authorities have stood by while right-wing extremists and vigilantes have assaulted journalists and anyone who speaks out. Trolls and online abusers threaten and intimidate journalists – especially women – with impunity. Asserting the fundamental right to freedom of expression has been met with harassment, intimidation, detention and cases.

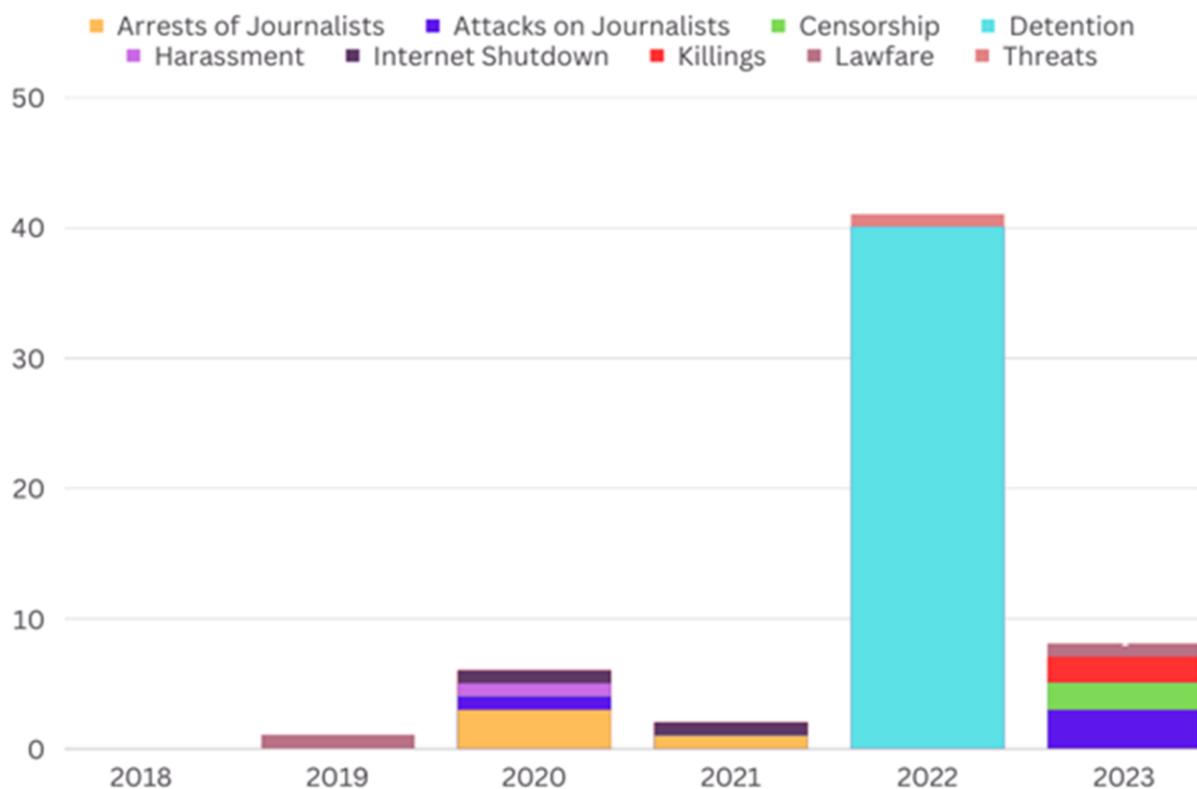
While the BRS [poll manifesto](#) promises to widen the social security net, there is no mention of ensuring democratic rights or press freedom.

A Snapshot of Free Speech in Telangana, 2018-2023

Recorded Incidents: 58

Categories	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
Arrests of Journalists			3	1			4
Attacks on Journalists			1			3	4
Censorship						2	2
Detention of Journalists					40		40
Harassment			1				1
Internet shutdown			1	1			2
Killings of Journalists						2	2
Lawfare		1				1	2
Threats					1		1
TOTAL	0	1	6	2	41	7	58

TELANGANA (2018-2023)



<https://freespeechcollective.in/>

Annexure

Status of Free Speech in Chhattisgarh, 2018-2023			
Recorded Incidents: 32			
No. of Cases	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Arrest of Journalists	2019	Journalist Mangelal was arrested in June 2019 for allegedly spreading false rumours over power cuts in Rajnandgaon. However, he was released a few hours later, after the intervention of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. According to reports, Baghel said that sedition charges should not be slapped randomly against people.
1	Arrest of Journalist	2019	Journalists DevKrishna Pandey (working with Dainik Bhaskar) and Ramhari Gupta noticed illegal mining in the bordering states of UP and MP and informed the TI Basantpur as well as the Collector and Tehsildar. On July 13, they requested the Tehsildar to visit the site. The latter came to the site but left soon after, promising to return the next day. After he left, the TI came with a force and forcefully took Ramhari Gupta and Pandey to Wadrafnagar government hospital where they were assaulted by the SDPO Durgesh Jaiswal. They were sent to Ramunjganj jail on the charge of misbehaving with a local Adivasi police personnel. An SC/ST Atrocity case was slapped against them. They were released on bail after ten days. Pandey's newspaper did not stand by him and he was forced to quit his job.
1	Arrest of Journalists	2019	Journalist Ramhari Gupta (working with Dainik Bhaskar) and journalist Dev Krishna Pandey had reported on illegal sand mining in the bordering states of UP and MP and informed the TI Basantpur as well as the Collector and Tehsildar. On July 13, they requested the Tehsildar to visit the site. The latter came to the site but left soon after, promising to return the next day. Two days later, after they published the story, Gupta and Pandey were picked up by the police and taken to Badyun Chowki, from there they were taken to the hospital where the SDOP, Durgesh Jaiswal. They were sent to Ramunjganj jail on the charge of misbehaving with a

No. of Cases	Category	Year	Brief Information
			local Adivasi police personnel. An SC/ST Atrocity case was slapped against them. They were released on bail after ten days.
1	Lawfare	2020	<p>Manish Soni has been a journalist for over 15 years. He currently runs a portal chhattisgarh post.in. Manish filed several in-depth reports on a range of issues including politicians violating Covid-19 lockdown, custodial deaths in Ambikapur, unhygienic conditions in hospitals during the pandemic as well as protests by villagers against mining in Hansdeo Arand forest region. On August 16, 2020, Assistant Sub-Inspector of Ambikapur police station Mr. Rakesh Yadav lodged an FIR (No. 33354002200463) against Mr. Soni under IPC Sections 153(a) (promoting enmity between classes), 153(b) (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration) and 505 (2) (false statement, rumours, with an intent to create enmity). The FIR was based on a written complaint from Mr. Alok Dubey, a BJP ward member, who alleged Mr. Soni created hatred among ordinary citizens and adivasis towards the security forces through Facebook posts, thus affecting national unity and integrity. Though Mr. Soni was not arrested, he was harassed and intimidated repeatedly over the phone after the FIR was filed.</p>
1	Lawfare	2020	<p>On 26 April 2020, the Chhattisgarh government issued a show-cause notice to Neeraj Shivhare, a journalist with Bastar ki Aawaz, for his report, published the previous day, on the plight of a woman from Geedam who was forced to sell her household items including the fridge, for Rs 2,000, to buy ration as the family had not received assistance from the administration during COVID-19 lockdown. The authorities said his report had “damaged the image of the administration”. The notice asked Neeraj Shivhare to appear before the authorities in Dantewada and provide an explanation for his article. The notice issued to the journalist stated, “Given that the whole country is facing the coronavirus pandemic, this kind of post</p>

No. of Cases	Category	Year	Brief Information
			spreads fear among the people and spoils the image of the administration," and further threatened to file an FIR against him. The woman reportedly stood by the interview she had given to the Dantewada-based journalist.
1	Lawfare	2020	Shivkumar Chaurasiya has been a journalist since 2013-14. He was Bureau chief of Khabarwala.news and was also handling another web newsportal, Clipper28. In 2020, during the Covid lockdown period, Chaurasiya questioned a constable who was drunk and without a mask. For this, a case of obstructing a police officer on duty was filed against him.
1	Attacks on Journalists	2020	Journalist Kamal Shukla was assaulted and threatened by local Congress workers in Kanker district for filing RTIs and reporting on the sand mafia in Chhattisgarh.
1	Threats	2020	Suresh Kumar Gupta, an Ambikapur based independent journalist, who contributes weekly once to Danik Bhaskar and Amar Sthamb, reported on the threats received by four families in Dullu Gram Panchayat by some Adivasi believers in the Christian faith to convert to Christianity. He reported the story and disclosed that he was also attacked for his reportage and his house and farm were vandalised. A few days later, pro-Hindutva groups contacted him and said they were happy with his reporting and wanted him to come to the village. Initially reluctant as he did not want his story to get a communal colour, he responded to their multiple calls and visited the village with three friends. However, as soon as they entered the village, their vehicle was surrounded and they were threatened. Local police encouraged him to file an FIR at Dhaurpur police station. Soon after the video news went viral, he was threatened that a case would be lodged against him. Gupta believes that the threats were intensified also due to his stories of corruption by the Sarjuga Janpad UpAdhyaksh (Block Deputy President) and nephew of Dy CM T S Singh Deo and by the local tehsildar and panchayat sachiv, which

No. of Cases	Category	Year	Brief Information
			had resulted in their suspension. Gupta says senior police officers, including the IG Surguja, advised him to lie low. Ever since, he has stopped filing stories for fear of arrest.
1	Internet shutdown	2021	Internet services were suspended in Kawardha town in Chhattisgarh when violence broke out between two communities over removal of religious flags from a thoroughfare.
1	Arrest of Journalist	2021	Journalist Ramhari Gupta reported on the bad construction of the government library building of a higher secondary government school. Soon after being published, the contractor filed charges against him of extortion and instigating the labourers against him. Gupta got a lot of support from his editor Trilokpur Kushwaha in Ambikapur who appealed to national journalists as well for support and also arranged for legal support and finally got him out on bail. The trial is on. Gupta continues with the same paper; however, he is a little scared and self-restricts in publishing bold investigative pieces. He is now with digital news Rihand News.
4	Threats	2021	Journalists Vishal Gupta, Deepak Manikpuri, Bhupendra Khosla and Aditya Gupta had reported in their respective channels Bharat Samman and The Tandav about the contract for railway parking being given to politically connected persons and charges levied from the public despite the expiry of the term of the contract. An argument over this ensued between the journalists and the parking contractor late evening in 2021. All the four immediately approached the local thana in Surguja, however a counter FIR of having misbehaved with a woman was filed against the four of them charging them with IPC 354.
1	Threats	2021	Kaushalya Yadav has been working as a journalist since 2014. In his paper "Dabang Dunia", a Raipur published paper, he has been reporting on a number of illegalities deliberately overlooked by the police as it involves corruption. In 2018 over one such report, the Thana SHO filed a case of having sexually assaulted a minor, which after an investigation by

No. of Cases	Category	Year	Brief Information
			the IG, was found to be false and the FIR was made invalid. The same police officer with support from the district SP, filed another case in 2021. The case is on.
1	Arrests of Journalists	2021	Sajjid Hashmi has been a camera person for ANI, IndiaNews MP_CG and others since 2006. In 2021 two cases were filed against him along with Sunil Namdev and Mohammed Shehbaz. He was arrested in 2021 and after 6 months got bail. (along with Moh. Shehbaz), Sunil Namdev remained an additional 2 months before bail was granted to him.
1	Arrests of Journalists	2021	Sunil Namdev through his news channel has been doing several stories of corruption. In 2021 three cases were fabricated against him, said his wife, by random people like a restaurant owner for extortion, another case was slapped by a SC policeman under atrocity act as well as extortion, against him by contractors against whom he wrote. Against this he was arrested in November 2021 and in Feb 2022 he got his bail. Namdev continued to report. When nothing could stop Namdev from his explosive reporting, the government, claimed his wife, took to other means of declaring their house standing on illegal land and bulldozed it twice in Feb 2022 and against in March. Manmeet, his wife, claimed the family was called by police and threatened that he should stop reporting in this manner, in fact should leave the place if they do not want further harassment.
1	Arrests of Journalists	2021	Mohammad Shehbaz has two cases against him, arrested on 21st March 2021 and in jail for 6 months and came out in Aug 2021. He continues to bring out news in his portal, 'I do not care if they arrest or what', he says.
1	Arrests of Journalists	2022	Jitendra Jaiswal runs his YouTube channel Bharat Samman and reports from Surguja for over 5 to 7 years. He had trouble with both the BJP and the Congress government - in fact more so as the Congress formed the government. He has so far 12 cases against him, one during the BJP government and the rest during Congress government. He was

No. of Cases	Category	Year	Brief Information
			arrested on 8th April 2022 and kept in prison for 10 months until 15th Feb 2023. Out on bail Jaiswal continued to report.
1	Lawfare	2022	Munna Ram has been working as a camera person with journalist Jitendra Jaiswal. It was while reporting along with him that Munna Ram too had a case filed against him in 2022.
1	Threats	2022	Ravi Singh works as a reporter with a local digital news portal - currently with 'Dainik Ghat-thi Ghatna'. He's been a reporter since 2010 with other channels, and digital news portal. The first case filed against him on 2 February 2022 as a chat between two policemen which he got from another source was turned into a report as it involved corruption. Soon after this, he got an FIR filed in the SC/ST Atrocities Act by a policeman. He managed to get a bail from the HC after having to be under hiding for a couple of months thus disturbing his reporting. When he reported on a corrupt woman Tehsildar, she filed a complaint at the Mahila Ayog accusing him of harassing her through his reports. Singh has received at least 11 notices mostly from the police between 2020 and 2023 seeking explanation for his report, taking objection to his one sentence, which he felt was extremely bothersome. However, for each notice he has been responsible enough to respond with his argument and justify his report with evidence. When cases are filed, not many journalists stand by him.
1	Arrests of Journalists	2022	Along with Jitendra Jaiswal, Vijay Lal Markam has been reporting on regional level corruption including in MNREGA since 2017. After working with Media 24, he started his own website portal - TP News. Along with Jitendra Jaiswal, he had done a story on poor construction of public structure in a gram panchayat under PS Trikunda of Balramur district. The contractor slapped a case of extortion against both Jaiswal and Markam. An FIR was filed in 2022 but no arrest despite attempt could be made as Markam sought a bail from HC.

No. of Cases	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Threat	2022	Journalist DevKrishna Pandey (working with Rajasthan Patrika) covered the story of a woman who was cheated by a local policeman who had promised marriage to her. The SDOP who had beaten him up in 2021, threatened to arrest him again, but he managed to call his colleagues and was let off. Even during this incident, his newspaper did not stand by him and he was forced to quit.
1	Threats	2022	Sushil Baxi, Adivasi journalist, cameraman and reporter with Zee News CG, files several reports and investigative pieces on sand mining. He covered the protest by villagers against the establishment of an Aluminium Plant in Chirga village, close to Ambikapur town, by a private firm, Ma Kudargadhi Aluminium Refinery Private Limited, allegedly set up with the collusion of the government, with fake gram sabha meetings and the apathetic role of the Food and Civil Supplies Minister, Amarjeet Bhagat. Baxi reported on the villagers' gherao of Bhagat 15th December 2022 that had cases slapped against him. Irked by the coverage, a Congress Committee member, Irfan Siddiqui, filed a case against Baxi on 16th December 2022 accusing him of abusing him over the phone.
1	Lawfare	2023	Durgesh Gupta has worked as a reporter for Sadhana Channel for the last two years. In his five years career as a reporter, this is the first-time case filed against him, due to his reporting on the local MLA Chintamani Maharaj on incidents of corruption, land mafia, favouring the Hindalco Company as they favour him with gifts. A case of extortion was made to file by a Sarpanch from one of the villages of Kusumi block. However, two months later, the Sarpanch gave an affidavit stating he was forced to file the case. The MLA threatened him with worse cases, however the press club of Balrampur of which he is the vice president, stood with him and pressurized the IG Surguja to first investigate before making any arrests. Though the investigation is pending, he is hopeful of the FIR being nullified.

No. of Cases	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Lawfare	2023	Jitendra Jaiswal got a show cause notice for externment on 23rd October 2023. He was already out on bail in February 2023 in a 2022 case. He was called to be present with his statement on 27th October, which he did. He was summoned for a hearing before the magistrate on November 1 and a fresh date of November 22 was given to him. The externment notice and prolonged hearings severely restricted his mobility and adversely affected his reporting during the crucial period of the election campaign.
1	Lawfare	2023	Manoj Pandey has been running his video channel called Bulund Chhattisgarh and a weekly newspaper for the last 15 years. He has been doing a lot of explosive stories against corruption, for which he faced the brunt from both the BJP and Congress governments. The news was of corruption by officials (when BJP was in power) along with a BJP Minister. A case of extortion was filed by the officer. Pandey was arrested in 2014 and was in jail for 6 months. In 2023, a case of corruption and flouting rules was reported against a contractor, who filed a case of extortion against him, and the police promptly arrested him on 3rd June 2023 and got bail after 7 days in prison. Pandey continues to report and refuses to be cowed down by such FIRs and even arrests. He feels there are no strong journalist bodies in the state to stand against the government; most journalists are part of Godi media. He had to fight his case of his own accord with no support from anywhere.
1	Threats	2023	Vijaya Pathak is a woman journalist from Madhya Pradesh and covers news from CG and MP in her magazine - Jagat Vision, a magazine she started in 2000 in the name of her husband Jagat Pathak who was also a journalist. Pathak shared her relationship with Congress bigwigs until she reported that BJP was good as they were in opposition, but as soon as they came to power and her stories revealed stories of corruption etc in Congress, the guns were turned against her. So much so, CG police came to Bhopal to

No. of Cases	Category	Year	Brief Information
			take her to Raipur under some pretext but she sought help from the MP government that did not allow them to take her. She now fears entering CG as she fears her arrest.
2	Threats	2023	Vijay Lal Markam and another reporter, Akhilesh Sahu, were charged with extortion and unruly behaviour was filed in 2023 by a woman government teacher when they went to report on the condition of the school building. Her husband is a big contractor of forest produce and also influential.
1	Arrest of Journalist	2023	Sajjad Hashmi was arrested in June 2023 in the 2023 case of extortion and kept in jail for 15 days before granting bail. His career has been spoiled; however, he continues to work as a camera person. "I cannot do anything else," he says.
1	Arrest of Journalist	2023	In May 2023, police slapped an NDPS case against Sunil Namdev and arrested him on 31st May 2023 after keeping him in custody for three days, demanding as high as three crores from the family and finally putting him behind bars in Raipur Jail where he is still since May this year.

Status of Free Speech in Madhya Pradesh, 2018-2023

Recorded Incidents: 24

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Internet services in four districts in Madhya Pradesh's Bundelkhand region were suspended from midnight on Sunday after people there wanted to take out processions to mark Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi despite a ban by authorities.
1	Killings of Journalists	2019	Chakresh Jain, who reported for several Hindi dailies, died after sustaining burns under mysterious circumstances in Shahgarh. His family accuses agricultural officer Aman Chowdhary and his supporters of setting him ablaze. Two years prior, Chowdhary had filed a case under SC/ST Atrocities (Prevention) Act against Jain.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Mobile Internet services remained suspended till noon on Saturday in Jabalpur, Bhopal, and Indore, after protesters pelted stones at police in Jabalpur during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the all-India National Register of Citizens (NRC).
1	Lawfare	2020	Gwalior police file a case against senior journalist Tansen Tiwari, for allegedly referring to Bharatiya Janata Party leaders as gappu (braggart) and tadipar (externed) in a social media post. He was booked for 'public acts of obscenity', 'defamation' and for 'publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form'.
1	Internet shutdown	2020	Mobile internet services in Jabalpur city in Madhya Pradesh were suspended as a "precautionary measure" to curb protests against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act.
1	Killings of Journalists	2020	Sunil Tiwari, 39, a stringer with Nai Duniya newspaper, died after being attacked by thugs who fired shots at him and struck him with sticks and an axe. Before his murder, Tiwari had repeatedly appealed to the police for help. Tiwari alleged that he was being targeted for his reports and faced threats to his life. On May 25, he uploaded a video on his Facebook page, appealing to the Niwari police

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
			superintendent, the Niwari collector, and the Jhansi police superintendent for help. No action was taken.
7	Lawfare	2021	Multiple police cases have been filed in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh against Congress MP Shashi Tharoor and six journalists for allegedly “misreporting” and “spreading disharmony” on Republic Day when a tractor rally by farmers turned violent in Delhi. All of them face charges including sedition, criminal conspiracy and promoting enmity under the Indian Penal Code. One First Information Report (FIR) was filed in Noida and four FIRs in Madhya Pradesh’s Bhopal, Hoshangabad, Multai and Betul.
1	Lawfare	2021	Six FIRs were registered against directors and producers of Netflix (for allegedly hurting religious sentiments in the web series 'A Suitable Boy') and five FIRs registered in different cities against Amazon Prime (for the web series 'Tandav'). In March 2021, the Madhya Pradesh government announced that it will seek the right to take criminal action against web series for obscene and controversial content under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and passed a resolution to this effect in the state Assembly.
5	Lawfare	2021	Stand-up comedian, Munawar Faruqui, was arrested on charges of allegedly insulting Hindu gods and for violating Covid-19 protocol at a New Year event in a cafe in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Weirdly, he didn't even get to crack the allegedly offending joke. Aklavya Laxman Singh Gaur, an activist of the Hindu Rakshak and son of MLA and former Indore mayor Malini Laxman Singh Gaur, filed a complaint against Faruqui and police quickly arrested his associates Edwin Anthony, Prakhar Vyas, Priyam Vyas and another stand-up comedian Nalin Yadav

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
			<p>who opened the show. Charged under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 295-A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings or any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs), 269 (unlawful or negligent act likely to spread the infection of any disease dangerous to life), Faruqui managed to secure bail only on February 5 after a Supreme Court order. Two of his associates, Prakhar Vyas and Edwin Anthony got bail on February 12 while Nalin Yadav and Sadaqat Khan got bail on February 26, 2021.</p>
1	Arrests of other citizens	2022	<p>Police in Bhawarkuan, Indore, lodged an FIR against Dr Farhat Khan, author of the book titled 'Collective Violence and Criminal Justice System', on the directions of the state Home Minister Narottam Mishra after the local BJP-affiliated student body the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) alleged that the book contained "objectionable" content against Hindus and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Dr Khan was arrested on December 8, 2022, from Pune.</p> <p>Others charged included the principal of the Government New Law College Dr Inam Ur Rahman, Professor Mirza Mojiz Baig, and Amar Law Publication. Charges included sections 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence), 295-A (Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) of the Indian Penal Code.</p>
1	Censorship	2022	<p>Nitesh Alawa, a patwari (revenue officer) in Alirajpur district in Madhya Pradesh, was suspended from service for participating in a protest against the brutal attack on an adivasi woman in Guna district in Madhya Pradesh, who was burnt alive by men in the middle of a field. He had taken leave to participate in the protest. He has been active</p>

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
			in the fight for rights of Adivasis in the region and has in the past raised his voice against atrocities committed against the communities. Mr. Alawa is the district president, Alirajpur of the Madhya Pradesh Patwari Union and is the district vice president of the Scheduled Caste-Scheduled Tribe Officer Employee Organization.
1	Censorship	2023	<p>An FIR was lodged against Bhojpuri singer Neha Singh Rathore by Suraj Khare, a BJP worker, at the Habibganj police station in Bhopal. The complaint alleged that Rathore targeted the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist organization, through her social media post, where Rathore shared an image depicting a partially clothed man, allegedly identified as Pravesh Shukla, urinating on Dashmesh Rawat, a tribal person. The image portrayed the urinating man wearing a white half-sleeved shirt, a black cap on his head, with his khaki shorts placed aside.</p> <p>The FIR was lodged under Section 153(A) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which pertains to promoting enmity between different groups based on religion, race, etc.</p> <p>has found herself in legal trouble after being booked for a social media post related to the recent pee-gate controversy in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh. Rathore, known for her popular song 'UP me ka ba', shared a post highlighting an incident where a man was seen urinating on a tribal individual.</p>
1	Censorship	2023	The High Court of Madhya Pradesh, Gwalior Bench, recently granted bail to a man accused of hurting religious sentiments by posting “objectionable” material on social media. The accused was arrested in a case registered under Sections 153-A, 295A, 505(2) IPC. He was in judicial custody since December 24, 2022. As per the prosecution story, he had uploaded two posts on Facebook.

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Arrests of Journalists	2023	Journalist Jaalam Singh, working with online portal, Dainik Khulasa, was arrested and faces seven First Information Reports (FIRs) were registered under several sections including 153 (provocation with intent to cause riot), 384 and 385 (extortion), and 469 (forgery) of the Indian Penal Code. The FIR was registered after he published a story on a video of state minister of panchayat and rural development Mahendra Singh Sisodia and an unidentified woman.

Status of Free Speech in Mizoram, 2018-2023

Recorded Incidents: 5

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Other	2019	Mizoram Journalists Association sends a letter to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) protesting continuation of IUC (interconnect usage charges (IUC) despite a decision in 2018 to scrap it by 2020. The MJA said "...the welfare of consumers will be thrown out of the window" with the continuation of the "extortionate charge".
1	Censorship	2020	<p>The Border Security Force (BSF) and Young Mizo Association (YMA) under the leadership of Lunglei deputy commissioner on May 11, 2020 passed a resolution that "media persons should get prior permission from BSF commandants of their respective areas before visiting border areas for news coverage". The Mizoram Journalists Association, an umbrella body of working journalists in the state protested this resolution on grounds of curtailing freedom of the press.</p> <p>MJA alleged that media persons from Lunglei district were prevented from visiting the Indo-Bangladesh border for ground reporting despite showing their press credentials recently. A representation was submitted to the chief secretary for intervention so that journalists can have a free movement to report during lockdown.</p>
1	Attacks on Journalists	2023	Northeast journalist baton-charged by Assam Police while covering Assam-Mizoram border dispute.
1	Censorship	2023	Zodinsanga, one of Mizoram's first political cartoonists, uploaded his latest toon on Facebook, depicting his exit from Vanglaini, Mizoram's biggest newspaper. His 'Toonlaini', since 2004 with fearless satire about corruption and politics, often took on the ruling government led by the Mizo National Front.

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Threats	2023	<p>Journalist Ezrela Dalidia Fanai (X handle @DallyFanai) tweeted that she received "several calls and messages from 23 Sector of #AssamRifles, Khatla, ordering (intimidating) me to remove a news item I had prepared from a PR that they sent me." She further said she was being targeted because she was a woman journalist and other male journalists had published the same report but had not been intimidated.</p>

Status of Free Speech in Rajasthan, 2018-2023

Recorded Incidents: 72

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Threats	2018	Siddhartha Dutta, a journalist from The Times of India, was reportedly heckled and threatened by the local police in Rajasthan's Jaipur when he objected to a polling officer forcing people to vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party. The matter was resolved after the Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) heard the reporter's complaint. Although the polling officer was removed from duty, no action was taken against the SHO.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	2G/3G data mobile internet (internet service—bulk SMS/MMS, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and other media services through internet service providers (except voice calls) was suspended in view of the security situation. It was first suspended for 24 hours, and subsequently extended for another day.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	The district administration suspended Internet services in Sikar district in Rajasthan in the wake of rising tensions after the abduction of a newly-wed girl.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Internet (all data services) in the Sawai Madhopur district were suspended after the Gujjar community protested on the increasing of government jobs and education.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Internet (mobile and broadband) was shut down as a precautionary measure to prevent violence due to the spread of rumours after a seven-year-old girl was raped in the city.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	The internet was shutdown to prevent violence due to spread of rumours after a seven-year-old girl was raped in the city.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Mobile and broadband internet service suspended following clashes over a murder
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Clashes over a murder

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Preventative measure after communal violence
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Internet was shut down as a preventative measure after communal violence
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Internet was shut down amid protests against Citizenship Amendment Act
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Mobile internet services were suspended in some areas in Jaipur to prevent the spread of rumours after two groups clashed over an attack on a bus ferrying pilgrims.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	The internet services were suspended in Gangapur City of Sawai Madhopur district after communal tension broke out in the city.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Mobile and broadband Internet service suspended in many towns for 24 hours to prevent the spread of rumours following the killing of a youth, Ramesh Patel.
1	Internet shutdown	2019	Internet (mobile internet) shutdown to maintain law and order on the fifth day of agitation over quota in jobs and education
1	Killings of Journalists	2019	42-year-old RTI activist, Jagdish Goliya, died in police custody in Rajasthan's Barmer district on Sunday. His mother blamed police for the death, saying instead of taking him to a hospital, they took him to a magistrate. Goliya, who was arrested on Saturday in connection with a land dispute on charges of breach of peace, died on Sunday. Following the custodial death, SHO of Pachpadra police station was suspended. A case of murder was registered against the police officer and nine others.

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Defamation cases	2020	Rajasthan police in Pali district opened a criminal investigation into Virendra Singh Rajpurohit, an independent journalist who runs the YouTube channel News 30 Rajasthan, on charges of extortion and defamation for his critical analysis on the channel of the death of a labor leader in police custody. According to Rajpurohit and court records, the Rajasthan High Court ordered the police not to arrest the journalist while conducting its investigation but stipulated that if the investigation produces evidence to detain Rajpurohit, that the journalist must be given a 15-day warning before his arrest.
25	Internet shutdown	2020	Out of the 30 Internet shutdown orders, 25 were issued between 30.10.2020 and 09.11.2020, during protests by the Gujjar community demanding reservations in the ongoing recruitments and backlog vacancies and inclusion of a State reservation law in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.
1	Attacks on Journalists	2021	Amra Ram (30), an RTI activist, was allegedly abducted, beaten up and his legs were pierced with nails by some people on 21 December 2021. The activist had complained about the illegal liquor trade, following which action was taken and liquor was seized. Four men were arrested in connection to the incident. In February 2022, Amra Ram's wife said that they were still receiving threatening calls.
5	Internet shutdown	2021	5 orders were issued on 25 September, 2021 to shut down the internet on 26 September, 2021, i.e., the day on which Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers (REET) was conducted.
1	Internet shutdown	2021	Several districts in Rajasthan, including state capital Jaipur, Bikaner and Dausa, were scheduled to face 12-hour mobile internet shutdown from 6 AM on 24 October 2021 on account of the Patwari recruitment examination.

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Killings of Journalists	2021	A week after 27-year-old RTI activist Rai Singh Gurjar died in a road accident, his family alleged foul play, claiming he was killed by people he had exposed in graft cases over the last five years. In September 2019, Gurjar had raised his voice against corruption in developmental work being carried out in Titarwasa gram panchayat, which was adopted by Vice President Venkaiah Naidu under the MP model village scheme in May 2017. An FIR was registered under sections 302 (murder) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the IPC against four to five persons.
5	Attacks on Journalists	2022	Miscreants, who tried to capture a polling booth during panchayat elections in Bhamdevpur area, Jaipur district, attacked and kidnapped Gulshanaz Ali Khan, a journalist working with a private TV channel, who was covering the incident.
1	Censorship	2022	Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) was imposed in 17 districts of Rajasthan for approximately a month in a bid to maintain law and order situation after violence broke out recently during a religious procession in Karauli district.
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Internet was suspended in the wake of fresh communal clashes in Jodhpur on Eid
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Internet services suspended from 19th July 12 pm to 20th July 12 pm in Deeg, Nagar, Kaman, Pahari and Sikri tehsil areas of Bharatpur district in wake of protest call by sages against illegal mining, deforestation, and overloading in Braj area of the district.
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Internet services suspended in Amer district of Rajasthan due to threat to MLAs
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Section 144 & curfew imposed in Dhanmandi, Ghantaghar, Hathipol, Ambamata, Surajpol, Bhupalpura and Savina PS areas of Udaipur district. Mobile internet was suspended in Udaipur for 24 hours.

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Internet was shut down in Rajasthan over tension after the attack on a VHP leader
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Internet services were suspended for 24 hours after two persons were attacked by unidentified miscreants and their bike was set ablaze.
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Rajasthan government suspended internet services in four tehsils of Bharatpur district for 24 hours in the face of protests on reservation issue.
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Internet was shut down in Rajasthan's Karauli as communal clashes and arson broke out in the area. Section 144 was imposed in Karauli from 6:30 pm on April 2 to 12 am on April 4.
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Internet was suspended after clashes broke out between police and family members of the Dalit boy who was beaten to death.
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Internet services shut in Bhilwara amid tensions over the alleged killing of a 22-year-old boy, after which several Hindu organisations gathered and protested
1	Internet shutdown	2022	Internet service was suspended in Bhilwara city for 48 hours after a Muslim man was shot dead and his brother got wounded in the same attack
1	Internet shutdown	2022	The internet was suspended for 12 hours in Jhunjhunu to let a religious procession pass peacefully without any communal tension
1	Sedition cases	2022	Three FIRs were registered against TV news channel News18 anchor Aman Chopra for allegedly promoting enmity between different groups and hurting religious sentiments through his show on the demolition of a temple in Alwar district's Rajgarh. Chopra was also booked under Sections 124-A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code and Section 67 of the Informational Technology Act. The sedition case was put on hold by the Rajasthan High Court today following the Supreme Court's decision on the sedition law, and the arrest was put on hold too.
1	Internet shutdown	2023	Internet services were shut down 24 to 36 hours in at least ten cities to prevent question paper leaks of government teachers' recruitment exam.

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Internet shutdown	2023	Internet was shut down for 48 hours by Bharatpur district administration in areas adjoining the Rajasthan-Haryana border to prevent the spread of misleading and provoking content via social media platforms in the context of the killing of two men allegedly by cow vigilante groups.
1	Internet shutdown	2023	Internet was shut down in Nawalgarh in Jhunjhunu for 12 hours (2G-3G-4G-5G services) on the occasions of Holi 2023 to prevent communal violence as both Hindus as Muslims were out celebrating different festivals.

Status of Free Speech in Telangana, 2018-2023

Recorded Incidents: 58

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Lawfare	2019	<p>The Hyderabad police on Friday morning turned up at the doorstep of former Chief Executive Officer of Telugu media outlet Mojo TV, Revathi Pogadadanda. The police said that they were investigating a case registered under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act by a guest who had appeared on a debate on the channel who said he had been insulted. The police, who did not carry an arrest warrant, insisted on taking her to the police station.</p> <p>Earlier this year, Alanda Media had bought more than 90.54% stake in TV9. Ravi Prakash claimed that Alanda's hostile takeover was intended to strip away his editorial and operational independence. He also alleged that he was kept in the dark about the involvement of influential businessman Jupally Rameshwar Rao, owner of real estate company My Home Group, who is known to be close to various politicians including Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.</p> <p>Both Revathi and Ravi Prakash have claimed that the clampdown (a case of forgery was also booked against Ravi Prakash in May 2019) is part of an effort by the state government to curb editorial independence of media outlets which have been critical of the ruling party. Ravi Prakash is the founder of Mojo TV and former CEO of Associated Broadcasting Company Private Limited (ABCPL), the parent company of multilingual television news channel TV9.</p>

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Harassment	2020	The Narayankhed Municipal Commission allegedly demolished a house belonging to Paramesh, which was under construction at the time, after he reported on Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) MLA Mahareddy Bhupal Reddy violating the lockdown rules by having a birthday party attended by over 500 people
1	Internet shutdown	2020	Internet experienced a total shut down at the Million March venue where protesters flocked to Dharna Chowk for Hyderabad's Million March protest against the CAA-NRC-NPR.
3	Attacks on Journalists	2020	As efforts began to stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus, there was a crackdown on the media across India. In Hyderabad, three police officers attacked Ravi Reddy, the Hyderabad bureau chief for The Hindu newspaper, when he asked police to allow him through a barricade on his way home from work. He was accused of violating curfew though journalists were exempt from curfew strictures. Police in Hyderabad also beat and insulted Mendu Srinivas, political bureau chief of Telugu-language daily Andhra Jyothi, and hit Mohammed Hussain, a reporter for the English news website Siasat, for alleged lockdown violations while they were returning from work.
3	Arrests of Journalists	2020	Reporter Venkateshwara Rao, Editor Veeramalla Satyam and Sub-editor Shiva of Aadab Telangana were arrested on 6 July 2020 by Jubilee Hills police on charges of publishing false news and spreading rumours. The complaint was lodged by Mohammed Illyas, who stated that the article was 'fake', and created panic among the general public. The police accordingly registered a case under Section 505 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act, against both the publication and the editor.

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
1	Internet shutdown	2021	Prohibitory orders were clamped, and internet services suspended by the authorities at Bhainsa town in Nirmal district, following communal clashes between two groups on Sunday evening.
1	Arrests of Journalists	2021	Journalist Raghu was arrested from Hyderabad by the Mattampally police, near his house in Malkajgiri, while he reportedly stepped out to buy groceries amid the lockdown in the state. Initially thought to have been abducted, the police later issued a statement that he had been arrested. The journalist wrote for Tolivelugu and other media outlets and was a critic of the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS). The Mattampally police in Suryapet district said that they had picked up Raghu with regard to an old case where he had been booked under sections 146,147 and 148 (Rioting), 332 and 333 (Voluntarily causing hurt to deter public servant from his duty) read with 149 (unlawful assembly) of the Indian Penal Code besides relevant sections of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932.
40	Detention	2022	<p>At least 40 journalists and YouTube content creators from Telangana who present news and discuss politics on their platforms were allegedly detained by the state police and subjected to harassment allegedly for speaking against the Telangana Rashtra Samithi government and chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao.</p> <p>The detained reporters alleged that they were subjected to harassment for their coverage of the politically significant Huzurabad bye-election in October 2021. Srinivas, a reporter at Tolivelugu, a Telugu digital news channel, believes that his coverage of the recent Huzurabad election – where KCR’s once-close-aide-turned-rival Eetala Rajendar from the BJP emerged victorious, to the embarrassment of the ruling TRS – led the government to intimidate him and others using state</p>

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
			<p>machinery. Those detained alleged that they were picked up in an illegal manner, without any notice, before being questioned for nearly 12 straight hours by the police. Some allege that the police also took their phones and formatted them, in violation of the law.</p> <p>“Why are you speaking against the government? Why are you so against the chief minister? These were the questions they kept asking,” News Minute quotes Musham. Srinivas notes that while no case has been filed against him, the police let him go around midnight after warning him not to speak against the TRS government.</p>
1	Threats	2022	<p>Thulasi Chandu, a journalist with 14 years of experience working with several major media houses set up an independent YouTube channel in 2020, recognised as one of the best 50 upcoming channels by Unacademy’s Graphy select programme in 2021. Following her report on the communal overtones evident in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Elections, she was incessantly attacked by trolls, with name-calling soon giving way to graphic rape and murder threats. Although Thulasi filed a complaint with the cyber wing of the Hyderabad City Police in January 2022, no action was taken against the main perpetrator who had been running a malicious campaign against her, even using morphed images to malign her. After Thulasi’s post on Facebook on June 24, 2023, in which she expressed her apprehension that she would one day be killed, and following the widespread support and solidarity she received in response, the police finally registered a fresh First Information Report (FIR 777/2023) on 26 June.</p>

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
2	Attacks on Journalists	2023	Reporter Prathibha Priyadarshani Mukkera and camera person Bhanu Mudhiraj from independent Telugu-language news channel Mojo TV were harassed and assaulted by members of a right-wing group while they were covering a protest against the Supreme Court decision in September 2018 allowing women to enter the Sabarimala shrine in Kerala. The judgement was opposed by conservative religious groups and Hindu right-wing political parties.
1	Killings of RTI activist	2023	A retired Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO) and Right to Information (RTI) activist, Nalla Ramakrishnaiah , was killed in Telangana's Jangaon district in an apparent fallout of a land issue. G Anjaiah, the prime accused, had a dispute with Nalla Ramakrishnaiah and nursed a grudge over the latter complaining against him to government officials over a land issue, police said. He allegedly hired a contract killing gang to eliminate Ramakrishnaiah, a police official said. Three persons were arrested for the alleged kidnapping and murder.
1	Lawfare	2023	A case was filed under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against human rights activist G Haragopal and five others, who were named among 152 people, in connection with the case involving some cadre of the banned CPI (Maoist) party. Subsequently, after a furore, the Telangana government decided to withdraw the case.
1	Censorship	2023	The teaser release of 'Razakar' movie, a periodic drama depicting events in Nizam's Hyderabad before its accession to the Indian Union in 1948, has ignited a storm of controversy on social media and the political landscape. The teaser, which claims to be based on true stories, portrays alleged atrocities against Hindus committed by the Razakars in their pursuit of promoting Islam and establishing 'Turkistan'. Raising strong objections to the movie and even its

No.	Category	Year	Brief Information
			teaser release, Telangana minister KT Rama Rao (KTR) said that some "intellectually bankrupt jokers of the BJP" are doing their best to instigate communal violence and polarisation. The minister also said that he would take up the matter with the censor board and Telangana Police
1	Censorship	2023	CPI's Rajya Sabha MP Binoy Viswam and its national secretary K Narayana met the regional director of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) demanding to stop the movie's release.
1	Attacks on Journalists	2023	A journalist working with ABN Andhrajyothy was attacked on Friday, May 19, allegedly by supporters of Kadapa MP Avinash Reddy. The supporters of Avinash, who is a suspect in the murder of former Minister Vivekananda Reddy, also attacked the van belonging to ABN Andhrajyothy. The Kadapa MP was summoned by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to their office in Hyderabad on Friday, in connection with the murder of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's uncle Vivekananda Reddy. Earlier in April, Avinash Reddy's father Bhaskar, was arrested in the case. Vivekananda Reddy was a relative of Avinash Reddy. On Friday, the MP skipped the investigation citing the ill health of his mother. The media, which were following the vehicle of the MP in Hyderabad and reporting live proceedings, were prevented from doing so. Supporters of the MP attacked the media persons and also vandalised their vehicle.
1	Killings of Journalists	2023	A former journalist was kidnapped and murdered by unidentified persons on the outskirts of Hyderabad, police said on Monday. Some unidentified men left a body at a hospital in the city's Gachibowli area at around 2 a.m. Informed by the hospital authorities, police rushed there and identified him as Mamidi Karunakar Reddy (29), who was kidnapped on Sunday night from Kottur near Hyderabad.