

(1) Iraq, Afghanistan ...

of journalists and media staff killed from information from its affiliates and other credible sources, after having established a clear or reasonable link between the killing and the professional activity of the victim.

However, the list does not represent all journalist and media professional deaths.

"The IFJ is aware of journalists who have gone missing and are feared killed but there is not enough information to determine that they have been killed," the rights group said.

Iraqis on Friday took to the streets to protest the abduction of a journalist by unknown gunmen.

Afrah Shawqi was taken from her home in a southern neighbourhood of the capital on Monday.

Shawqi, 43, is employed by Asharq al-Awsat, a London-based pan-Arab newspaper, as well as a number of news websites including Aklaam.

On Monday she published a stinging article on the website in which she hit out at the armed groups which "act with impunity" in Iraq.

As of 29 December, the IFJ documented 93 journalist and media staff deaths around the world, which is 19 deaths less than 2015.

"Any decrease in violence against journalist and media personnel is always welcome but these figures... leave little room for comfort and reinforce hopes for the end of the security crisis in the media sector," Leruth said in a statement.

Regionally the Middle East was deadliest with 30 killings, followed by Asia-Pacific with 28, Latin America with 24, Africa with eight and Europe with three, the watchdog said. (Monitoring Desk)

(2) Men Voted...

He said Nangarhar's women had issues with regard to casting their votes. He said men performed proxy voting for their women in previous elections. The shortage of female monitors was another major problem.

Aiymaq He hoped female monitors trained by them would work to ensure transparency in new elections in order to prove women's right to vote.

Qazi Lodin, an advisor to TEFA, said they had launched efforts at strengthening election observation and had launched public awareness programmes.

"We are spreading awareness about next elections with the help of civil society, so people give votes to those they see capable."

Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN) head Dr. Naimatullah Hamdard, speaking on behalf of civil society groups, asked the electoral bodies to pave the way women's participation in monitoring elections. He also called on the unity government leaders to begin the process of distributing computerized identity cards for the sake of transparency in the next elections.

A civil society activist, Sidiqa Jahanyar, told Pajhwok Afghan News the lack of transparency in previous elections eroded people's trust in the democratic exercise. He hoped their efforts would help restore people's interest in elections

"The government and electoral bodies should ensure rigging-free elections. Civil society organizations should

observe elections; it may encourage people to take part." (Pajhwok)

(3) Peace in ...

solutions," he said.

The British HC underlined the UK's determination to boost bilateral relations with Pakistan and expressed a strong desire to extend co-operation in multiple areas, particularly trade.

Both the sides agreed to work collectively to improve bilateral relationship between the United Kingdom (UK) and Pakistan, and reiterated to work together for the betterment of the region as a whole. (APP)

(4) 34 Insurgents...

Kunduz and Helmand provinces.

During the operation light and heavy weapons were seized by the security forces. No civilian or military casualties were reported during the operations. (Tolonews)

(5) Poppy Cultivated...

individuals concerned.

He did not have more information about the delegation's investigation, but said how much of the department's land was under Taliban's control would be known soon.

Azizullah, a resident of Batikot district, said the Taliban had cultivated poppies on state lands and had a satisfactory yield. He said the government and Taliban gave lands to farmers on lease in different areas.

Canalisation Director Abdul Rahimzai blasted the government for failing to establish its writ in Batikot, where most of state lands had been grabbed by the Taliban.

Abdul Rahmizai asked the government to retake control of government lands in Batikot and then cement its grip on Kunduz -- a veiled reference to the district chief's claim of winning the battle for the province.

The governor's spokesman, Attaullah Khogyani, said the issue came up for discussion at district security meetings, which deliberated on ways of retaking state-owned lands.

Earlier, a clash occurred between the two Taliban factions on state-owned lands, which resulted in casualties on both sides, as well as civilians. (Pajhwok)

(6) Apology Tendered ...

not played at the graduation ceremony.

"I apologize to the entire nation for not playing the national anthem," he said, insisting they had always respected the anthem. (Pajhwok)

(7) 'Illegal Gunmen ...

by illegal gunmen.

On the other hand, a number of provincial council members rejected the police chief's claim and said police had failed in controlling security problems.

A member of the council, Asif Momand, said the police chief should explain his claim which he rejected as baseless.

He admitted the presence of illegal gunmen in Mazar-i-Sharif, but said they were linked to local powerful individuals. (Pajhwok)

(8) Police Beat ...

and showed them my ID card.

"I asked them to search me as soon as possible because I was getting late for office. I've six minutes left to go. The police officer cursed and publicly beat me after drag-

ging me out of my car."

After beating Parhar, the policemen took him to the 2nd police district in the city. But when the district police chief came in, he sought apologies, the journalist said.

Parhar called the police action an insult to the journalist community and demanded a thoroughgoing and independent investigation.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Nasir Mehri, the governor's spokesman, confirmed Parhar was struck by a police sergeant. He said the policeman was in custody and a probe into the incident had been ordered. (Pajhwok)

(9) 'Mother Sold ...

did not marry a young man, said she never thought about marriage and it was her mother who sold her to the old man for 100,000 afghanis.

She said her father had died and her mother had married another person. She has a sister and four brothers who never knocked at home's door to inquire after her.

She said her mother, after her second marriage, gave birth to two daughters and three sons and cut off relations with her.

Zakia, now 20, said when her husband fell sick, his sons accused her of not taking proper care of their elderly father. She said her husband was bronchial asthma patient and needed oxygen every night.

Shams Rahman Farotan, a religious scholar, said injustice had been committed to the girl who was 14 and her husband 94 at the time of their marriage.

He said her husband might not survive for a long time and would die soon, but the girl might not be allowed to decide about her future and would be married to another man in the same family.

The religious scholar cited a hadith: "Harming yourself or others is against the teaching of Islam." He said forced marriages destroyed lives and Sharia required the consent of girl and her father in marriage.

Najibullah Babrakzai, child rights coordinator at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHR), said adult age was 18 in national and international laws while girls were married in Afghanistan before the age of 16 and for boys 18

He said nobody could force a girl or a boy into marriage if they were under 18 years of age and were not agreed to the union.

The article 71st of the civil law says: "When the girl does not complete the age provided under Article 70 of this law--which is 16, the marriage may be concluded only through her father or the competent court. The marriage of a minor girl whose age is less than 15 shall never be permissible."

Ghanizada, about inheritance rights of girls after husband's death, said: "The girl is entitled to inheritance in both according to the inheritance law and the civil law."

According to inheritance law, when a husband dies and leaves behind wife and children, the wife takes eighth part of legacy but when there is no child the wife then takes sixth part of the husband's legacy, he added.

He said in the third chapter of the Law on Elimination of Violence against

Women (EVAW), the 33rd article says: "A person who denies a woman her inheritance, in addition to restoring her legal share, he/she shall be sentenced to short term imprisonment not exceeding one

month."

Meanwhile, the 34th article of the EVAW says, "A person who possesses personal property of a woman or prevents her from acquiring it, based on the circumstances he/she shall be sentenced to short term imprisonment not exceeding 3 months and the property shall be given back to her."

He said if wife, daughter or sister were denied their rights, they could approach the legislation department of the Justice Ministry or the rights' department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Shohla Farid, a women's rights activist, said the main issue of women in Afghanistan was that they were considered inferior. Men considered women as their property and denied them the rights what the men enjoyed themselves. "Even God-granted rights of women are not respected."

She said in most cases women were not permitted to decide about fate and were married without considering their age.

She said age 16 was minimum age for girls and 18 for boy to get married under EVAW law. She said it was a great injustice to give in marriage a 14-year-old girl to a 94-year-old man.

Farid said for getting rid of the problem, literacy and awareness level of women should be increased.

Another issue of women in Afghanistan is cultural restrictions. Afghan women are unaware of their rights and men do not recognize their rights and dignity that result in crimes against women. Denial of inheritance to women is an obvious manifestation of this reality.

Sharafuddin Azimi, psychology professor at the Education Faculty of Kabul University, said age of girl and boy before wedding was an essential issue which needed serious attention.

"Whenever the age of woman during wedlock is three years lower than the husband, the emotional growth of wife in this situation is faster compared to the husband," he said.

He said a man at the age of 23 could comfortably marry a girl aged 20, because the couple from emotional, moral and social point of view were well grown and their union could result in a prosper family.

"When a girl at 14 weds a man at 94, the social relationship between them and their sexual characters don't match at all. And we cannot call such wedding a family; this connection could be termed a cruel relationship."

Psychologists believe if the age difference is larger, then a parental and maternal relationship occurs. For example, if the age difference is 10 or 20 years, the couple actually doesn't have a sense of spouse.

They believe the relationship between the 20-year-old girl and the 100-year-old man is like a father and a daughter.

They say if girls are married before 20 years of age, their children are born twins and in bad shape. The girls couldn't rear children properly, children die and born with health related complications. (Pajhwok)

(10) Helmand-Kandahar...

He said operations in areas near Lashkargah had been planned and had begun in some areas. He said 'incompetent' security officials had been replaced and several ar-

reas which had been lost to the rebels would be recaptured soon.

Helmand deputy transport director Syed Hashmatullah Elmi said they were informed by the military this morning to direct vehicles on the highway.

But drivers did not travel on the highway until noon due to security concerns, he said, adding that common people should travel on the highway without any fear.

Israr, a local resident, said a large number of vehicles remained stopped in Dorahi area fearing clashes between security forces and militants.

A policeman, who wished go unnamed, said intermittent firing could be still heard in Degolang locality and there was no other issue. (Pajhwok)

(11) ANA Commander...

to hospital and Gen. Raziq was said to be in stable condition. He said at least 15 insurgents had been so far eliminated and several others wounded during the ongoing operation.

A resident of Charkh district, Habibullah, said residents stayed indoors over the past 24 hours due to ongoing clashes in the area. Light and heavy weapons were being used, he said, without knowing anything about casualties. However, Taliban's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, claimed Gen. Raziq was among several other soldiers killed in the clashes. He admitted the killing of a few fighters and wounding of three others. (Pajhwok)

(12) 2 Robbers in ...

leaders on their car to avoid being suspected, Khogyani said.

The governor's spokesman said intelligence officials had also arrested an active member of the Islamic State group. He said cases of the detainees were currently under review with the NDS and they would be referred to the attorney's office soon.

A video of the detained persons was shown to the media persons, in which the detainees are confessing to their crimes. (Pajhwok)

(13) ANA Soldier...

militants, who came on motorcycles took the ANA soldier from crowd of young people and killed him in another place.

Elsewhere, four insurgents were killed including a notorious commander during Special Forces' clearing operation in the Achin district of Nangarhar province, Police Spokesman, Col. Hazrat Husain Mashriqiwal said.

He said the operation took place in Inzir locality of the district where weapons belonging to rebels were also destroyed in the offensive.

In Batikot District, Notorious rebels' commander was arrested in Hafiz Kodi locality of Bati Kot district during security forces raid.

Taliban have not yet commented about the incidents. (Pajhwok)

(14) 2 Uprising Group ...

to the hospital at midnight. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed three local security officials were killed and four others wounded in the bomb attack by members of the militant outfit. (Pajhwok)

(15) Merkel Says...

2017 election, polls put her conservative bloc well ahead of rivals but a fractured electoral landscape risks complicating the coalition arithmetic.

"Election year 2017: For Merkel, nothing is certain any more", ran a headline in Saturday's edition of mass-selling daily Bild.

The paper wrote that for an increasing number of voters the chancellor, 62, no longer appeared unassailable.

ANCHOR OF STABILITY Liberals across the Atlantic have hailed Merkel as an anchor of stability and reason in a year that saw Donald Trump elected as U.S. president, Britain vote to leave the EU and U.S.-Russia relations deteriorate to Cold War levels.

In her address, Merkel compared Brexit to a "deep incision" and said that even though the EU was "slow and arduous", its member states should focus on common interests that transcend national benefits.

"And, yes, Europe should focus on what can really be better than the national state," Merkel said. "But we Germans should never be led to believe that each could have a better future by going it alone."

She was alluding again to the populist AfD, which wants Germany to leave the EU and shut its borders to asylum seekers, more than one million of whom arrived in the country this year and last.

The record number of migrants has hurt Merkel's popularity and fueled support for the AfD, which says Islam is incompatible with the German constitution. But her conservatives are still expected to win the general election in nine months.

Merkel has made security for her Christian Democrats (CDU).

In her speech, she said the government would introduce measures to improve security after a failed Tunisian asylum seeker drove a truck into a Christmas market in the capital on Dec. 19, killing 12 people in the name of Islamic State.

He was shot dead by Italian police in Milan on Dec. 23 and investigators are trying to determine whether he had accomplices. (Reuters)

(16) MSF Sound...

a cold snap, Perrin told Greek national news agency AMNA.

"Greek authorities promised months ago they would improve living conditions on the islands, but very little has been done," Perrin said.

Almost 16,000 refugees and migrants remain stranded on the islands for months in overcrowded camps since March, when the EU-Turkey agreement that aimed to curb the refugee influx came into effect due to delays in the assessment of their asylum bids. The MSF also warned the UN refugee agency and the Greek government of the consequences of a lack in coordination, which he said affects the health of refugees. (Xinhua)

(17) Trump Praises...

one in New York, would also soon be shuttered, according to the State Department. (Xinhua)

(18) Iran Welcomes...

return enjoy more expeditious access to Middle Eastern and Asian markets through Iran.

The Iranian president also said that Iran and Romania's joint economic commission is expected to meet in the future in the Romanian capital of Bucharest. (Presstv)