



# Lecture- 13



## What is the current state of the press?

Although there has been some progress from the time when ‘freedom of the media’ can be estimated, the situation today is not very good. There have been lots of cases of hate crimes, false accusations, trials due to wrongful portrayal, fake news, etc., in the recent years.

Let’s take a look at the following:

- **Fake News:** We have all fallen victim to fake news which is so widely circulated that we believe it to be the truth.
- **Paid News:** Due to journalism and news-reporting being a low-paying job, some professionals often publish false news in exchange of a payment.
- **Biased Media:** High-paying criminals and politicians often pay media companies to cover ‘good’ and charitable moments of themselves. This leaves the audience biased, especially when it comes to elections.
- **Crimes against journalists**

As of 2021, [6 journalists](#) have been killed because of their work. India is among the top 4 countries with the most number of deaths on record. Whether it is on job or off the job, they have been targeted and attacked due to their work.

Over the course of the last five years (2017-2021), 138 cases of assault and attacks against journalists were recorded. In Uttar Pradesh alone, 12 were killed, 48 were attacked and 66 were booked under various charges and cases.

Several cases of crimes have surfaced over the years. Some of the most prominent cases have been listed here.

### Daniel Pearl

Daniel Pearl was an American Jew who was working in Mumbai, India as the South Asia Bureau Chief of *The Wall Street Journal*. He went to Pakistan to investigate the links between British citizen Richard Reid (i.e. shoe bomber) and Qaedat-al Jihad. He was abducted on



January 23, 2002, and was found dead on February 1, 2002. His body, however, was discovered only on May 16, 2002.

[This file photo obtained on Jan. 30, 2002, shows Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl in captivity by Pakistani militants.](#)

A video was released by the captors called “The Slaughter of the Spy-Journalist, the Jew Daniel Pearl.” In this video, Pearl identified himself and later in the video, his throat was slit and his head severed. The video ends with the captors demanding that all Muslim prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay are released immediately or beheadings like these will keep happening “again and again”.

### **Subhash Kumar Mahto**

On May 20, 2022, Subhash Kumar Mahto was returning from a family dinner in a small Bihar district when he was shot in the head by four men who fled the scene.

#### *Journalist Subhash Kumar Mahato*

Saurabh Kumar, a stringer at a national channel and general secretary of Begusarai District Journalists Association, told *The Wire*, “In the election of a ward



member, Mahto had supported a candidate and that candidate won. Apart from this, he was continuously reporting against the liquor mafia as well as the sand mafias. These can be the reasons behind his murder.”

### **Gauri Lankesh**

On September 5, 2017, journalist and activist Gauri Lankesh, the editor of a weekly Kannada tabloid *Gauri Lankesh Patrike*, was shot dead in front of her residence in south Bengaluru. The then Congress government in Karnataka had constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate the murder.

#### *Journalist Gauri Lankesh*



The SIT has stated in the court proceeding that Gauri Lankesh was targeted for vehemently opposing Hindutva in her writings and speeches. SIT in the charge sheet submitted by them had named 18 people as accused in the murder. Yet, the case has not concluded.

Journalism is a hard job and those who make it are constantly in fear of losing their lives or getting harmed. We don't make it any easier for them with the lack of laws protecting journalists especially. The Government and other bodies are trying to curb hate crimes and protect the lives of journalists by making stricter laws and executing a penalty as and when necessary. Moreover, they are trying to reduce the spread of fake news and misinformation. We can only hope that in times to come, necessary steps will be taken as we await a world where freedom of the press has lesser curbs and where rules for better protection of journalists are readily introduced in the country.