

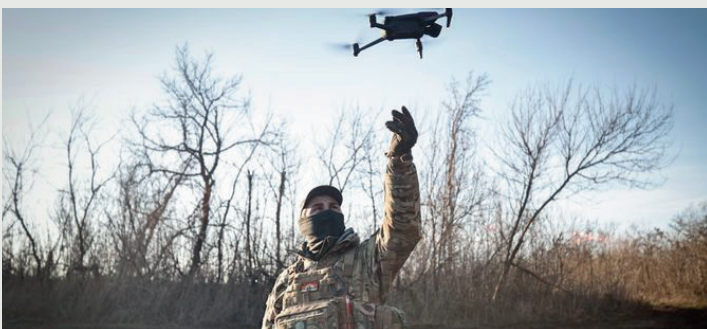


WORLD ANTI EXTREMISM
NETWORK
BUILDING A FREE WORLD

UNCENSORED WATCH

Defending Freedom, Challenging Extremism and Authoritarianism

Issue 2 | October 2024



UNCENSORED WATCH

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Issue:

Uncensored watch | Issue 2, October 2024

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SECTION - 1:

Welcome to Uncensored Watch - A Project of
World Anti Extremism Network

Welcome to Uncensored Watch!

We're thrilled to bring you the latest edition of **Uncensored Watch**, featuring a curated selection of insights, updates, and reports focused on the critical issues impacting societies worldwide. This newsletter is designed with your interests at heart, providing you with essential knowledge, compelling stories, and meaningful ways to stay engaged.

In this issue, we cover a range of pressing topics, from threats to democracy and human rights violations to the rise of extremism and authoritarianism. We also include details on our upcoming conference and a special brainstorming section crafted to inspire active dialogue and solutions.

Each article reflects our commitment to confronting and eliminating extremism and authoritarianism globally. We hope this edition informs and motivates you, and we always welcome your feedback and ideas as we strive to make Uncensored Watch even more impactful.

Thank you for joining us on this mission.

Warm regards,

The Uncensored Watch Team



SECTION - 2:

Global Crisis in Focus



Header image created with generative AI

Democracy in Peril: Parliamentary Move to Curb Judiciary Sparks Fear of Anarchy in Pakistan

A few days earlier, a special parliamentary committee, chaired by Syed Khurshed Shah, approved one of the drafts of some proposed constitutional amendments that are highly controversial. These amendments can potentially erode the independence of the country's judiciary. Restricting the excellent attendance of the current Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan's Supreme Court-Cyrus, these revisions seem to bring about a recession in the country's democracy. The proposed amendments involve radical changes and restructuring of the judiciary system in the country which presents dangers for independence of the judiciary. The most controversial change is the ability of the prime minister to choose one of the three senior judges and appoint him as CJP, which may bring other dangers for judicial powers. Also, the limitation on the number of government actions in which it can exercise self-initiated public interest jurisdiction which is termed as Suo motu reduces the degree to which the judiciary may supervise the use of government powers. These two, the suggested three-year rule for

the CJP and the suggestion of creating five bench constitutional benches having only defined jurisdiction, reduce the supremacy of the Supreme Court. The amendments also let the parliamentary commission monitor judges which is a gross interference in the judiciary branch.

If this legislation is enacted, it may signify a return to a period of totalitarian or autocratic rule and extent of executive authority. The international community as well as the civil society must put pressure on the Pakistani authorities to withdraw these amendments, for there is no rule of law and democracy without an independent judiciary. It is an unfortunate fact and history in certain cases like Turkey has illustrated that what such steps lead to is the decline of democracy and most importantly a very alarming statement for how a sovereign state should be run. The hierarchy and chains of command must unite in severe and immediate legal action from the judiciary and robust civil and democratic opposition fellow broader entities to diffuse this constitutional crisis from dissolving into sheer chaos.



A Horrific Tradition Revived: Court Acquittals in Roop Kanwar “Sati” Case Spark Human Rights Outrage

Rajput organizations organized protests in support of their right to worship the goddess “Sati”

The case of eight men alleged to have engaged in glorification activities relating to the gory death of 18-year-old Roop Kanwar, who was the victim of the outlawed “Sati” system, is 37 years old. The Commission of “Sati” (Prevention) Act 1987, which was established immediately after her life to oppose and punish “Sati” and its celebration, is also advancing. The court concluded “no evidence,” something that should concern everyone concerning decent law enforcement and India’s ability to respect human rights.

While Roop Kanwar’s death may be seen by some in her upper-caste Rajput community as an act of self-sacrifice or heroism, the reality is far from voluntary; reports indicate she was forcibly placed on her husband’s funeral pyre, screaming and in visible agony. Witnesses recount that she had been set on fire, alive and suffering. The recent legal ruling in her case has sparked intense backlash from women’s groups and activists, who argue that the decision threatens to revive the regressive, dangerous glorification of “Sati” within Indian society.

Forcing a woman to die simply because her husband has passed is not only a profoundly illogical practice but a blatant violation of fundamental human rights. A woman’s life should not be deemed expendable based on her marital status; she should not be condemned to death for the natural or untimely passing of her husband. Such coercive practices, which deny women their right to live and to determine their own fate, reflect an outdated and deeply unjust mindset that must be permanently eradicated. Women’s rights organizations are now urging Rajasthan authorities to pursue an appeal against these acquittals to secure justice for Roop Kanwar and prevent any revival of the abhorrent practice of “Sati.” They call for stringent legal measures and social reforms to eliminate such harmful traditions and ensure no woman is ever again forced into such a cruel fate in the name of tradition.

Escalation of Drone and Missile Strikes Deepens Civilian Suffering in Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Amid the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia, Moscow claimed to have intercepted 110 Ukrainian drones during a large-scale night attack on its western front. As a counterattack, Russia carried out missile strikes targeting Ukraine with missiles that struck civilian populations in Kryvyi Rih and Zaporizhzhia. These perpetual battles on either

side emphasize the rising violation of human rights or intentionally attacking civilian places. Both issues are now alarming to the international community.

The mutual escalation of drone and missile attacks reveals the indiscriminate nature of warfare between the two nations. While Russia claims to defend its territory, Ukraine suffers immense damage to civilian infrastructure, including homes and businesses. Seventeen people were injured in Kryvyi Rih, while a missile strike in Zaporizhzhia left ten civilians wounded. These deliberate assaults on civilian populations violate international humanitarian law, which prohibits targeting non-combatants in conflict zones.

This ongoing war, which has stretched beyond 1,000 days, has led to countless killings and human rights abuses, many of which remain unrecorded due to the relentless nature of the conflict. Casualty numbers are often mentioned almost routinely, yet the lasting impact on human rights is frequently overlooked. The war has normalized severe human rights violations to the point where reports of civilian deaths and injuries are acknowledged without significant intervention, underscoring a troubling desensitization to human suffering.

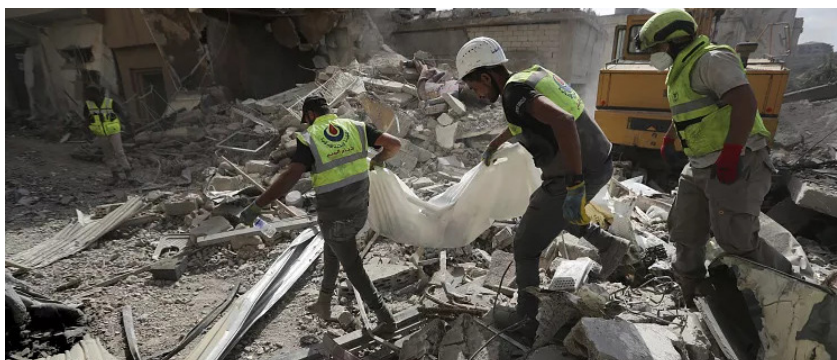
From another perspective, this conflict can be seen as a resurgence of the ideological tensions that marked the Cold War, with echoes of the past struggles between communism and capitalism. Unlike the Cold War era, however, this conflict is no longer between superpowers but rather between a powerful state and a relatively weaker one. Despite the evolving nature of the adversaries, the outcomes remain equally devastating. War, in any form, is unacceptable, and the international community must mobilize with firm resolve to stop such atrocities. Coordinated efforts across nations, strict enforcement of humanitarian laws, and support for peacebuilding initiatives are essential to address and ultimately end this prolonged humanitarian crisis.



A Ukrainian serviceman flies a drone during an operation against Russian positions at an undisclosed location in the Donetsk region, Ukraine, Sunday, Dec. 4, 2022. (AP Photo/Roman Chop)

It is imperative that the international society's voice be heard and both countries assist with humanitarian relief. To prevent the situation from worsening, worldwide authorities must place firmer restrictions against attacking civilian targets. The reports of various organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, should assist in the conduct of diplomacy and peace processes to halt further suffering of civilians.

Middle East Conflict Intensifies as Leaders Push for Ceasefire Amid Escalating Civilian Crisis



Rescue workers carry remains of killed people at the site that was hit by Israeli airstrikes in Qana village, 16 October, 2024. Mohammad Zaatar/Copyright 2024 The AP. All rights reserved.

As a result of the persistent increase in hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, British Premier Keir Starmer and President Joe Biden parleyed on possible measures to address the Middle Eastern conflict. The two leaders stressed that military means are but one of the options for resolving the dispute. President Biden, French President Macron, and German Chancellor Scholz met in Berlin for discussions about planning strategy, with President Biden notably suggesting that a truce with Hezbollah is more realistic than a truce with Hamas.

The latest Israeli attacks in Lebanon, which involved up to 15,000 Israeli troops, The intensifying conflict between Israel and Hezbollah carries severe implications for human rights, amplifying the already staggering violations occurring across the region. This is especially evident in Gaza and southern Lebanon, where civilians endure daily violations of their rights to life, security, shelter, and access to necessities. The destruction of essential infrastructure in Gaza has left approximately 80 percent of buildings reduced to rubble, while the continuous airstrikes have cut off access to food, clean water, and medical care—fundamental rights outlined by international humanitarian law.

The unchecked violence in these areas further deepens human rights abuses, disproportionately affecting children, women, and elderly individuals. Civilians are often caught in the crossfire without a safe escape, and hospitals face overwhelming demand for limited resources, impacting both short-term survival and long-term health outcomes. Additionally, reports of targeted detentions, indiscriminate bombings, and restricted humanitarian aid access all point to significant rights violations. These actions erode the social fabric of affected communities, leaving lasting trauma and displacement that may take decades to overcome.

The potential for increased human rights abuses extends beyond physical harm, as forced displacement can lead to prolonged psychological distress, loss of economic stability, and fractured family units. In both Gaza and Lebanon, the persistent instability and insecurity create a hostile environment that prevents residents from exercising even the most basic freedoms, such as freedom of movement, freedom of association, and freedom from fear.

For these reasons, global leaders, humanitarian organizations, and international watchdogs need to apply pressure on all parties to halt the violence and facilitate humanitarian corridors. Diplomats and human rights bodies like Amnesty International and the UN must emphasize civilian protections in line with the Geneva Conventions and work actively to hold perpetrators of human rights violations accountable. This proactive approach can prevent further degradation of human rights, restore some level of security for civilians, and encourage a return to diplomatic pathways that prioritize human dignity and the sanctity of life in conflict-affected areas.

Priest's Murder in Southern Mexico Sparks Outcry Over Escalating Violence Against Rights Defenders

The recent assassination of Catholic priest Marcelo Perez in Chiapas, Mexico, stands as an indicator of escalated violence against activists and defenders of indigenous rights. Father Perez, who devoted his life to the struggle for indigenous and labor rights, was murdered by two men on a motorbike soon after he left a church service. His killing occurs in conditions of increasing violence in the southern state, with nearly 500 murders registered between January and August this year.

As for Perez, his criticism of organized crime and the desire to assist the indigenous community of Chiapas put him on the hit list. The Jesuits admired Father Perez for his decades of struggles and his commitment to defending the community's self-respect and honor. The area, which is under the control of gangs, suffers not only from mass murder but also from forced recruitment, abduction, and resource plundering.

The UN and various human rights groups had previously warned about increasing threats against Perez. According to a 2023 Amnesty International report, Mexico ranks among the highest countries for murders of environmental defenders, with rights activists routinely facing criminalization and violence. In a country where 95% of homicides remain unsolved, accountability remains elusive.

The Mexican government must take immediate steps to protect activists and Indigenous leaders. Strengthened legal measures, international oversight, and prosecution of criminal actors are essential to ensuring justice for Perez and preventing further violence against rights defenders.



People gather around an altar at the location where Catholic priest Marcelo Perez was fatally shot after attending mass at a church in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas state, Mexico, October 20 [Isabel Mateos/AP Photo]

Pakistani Student Protests Erupt Over Alleged Campus Rape, Exposing Deep-Seated Issues of Violence and Justice

The recent reports of sexual assault on a Lahore college campus and the subsequent violent protests underscore a deep-rooted crisis of gender-based violence and societal indifference in Pakistan. The victim-blaming mentality often prevalent in such cases places undue scrutiny on female victims, suggesting they provoked the abuse through their behavior or clothing—a narrative both baseless and damaging. In this case, the fact that the student was in her uniform when assaulted starkly contradicts any excuse of “provocation,” laying bare the misogyny and prejudice that permeates society. This pervasive mindset has consistently hindered justice for survivors, deflecting blame away from perpetrators and perpetuating an environment where victims are stigmatized rather than supported.

The issues extend beyond this single case; alarmingly, violence against women and girls, including heinous acts like assault against minors or even deceased girls, persists with little meaningful accountability. According to the Sustainable Social Development Organization, while 7,000 rape cases were reported in 2023, this is likely only a fraction of actual incidents, as most go unreported due to fear, shame, and social pressures. This cycle of silence is fueled by societal norms that discourage survivors from seeking justice, fearing reputational damage and victim-blaming that often follows any attempt to report abuse.

In response to these systemic injustices, Pakistan’s handling of sexual violence cases demands urgent reform. Victim blaming must be condemned as part of a wider cultural shift that emphasizes empathy and justice. The police and judiciary play crucial roles in addressing gender-based violence and should be equipped with specialized training to handle sensitive cases compassionately, ensuring they prioritize survivor support and transparent investigations over outdated biases. Social and legal reforms are essential to protect women from abuse, encourage reporting, and uphold justice for survivors. Without a robust, clear commitment to safeguarding women’s rights, the cycle of violence will persist, undermining both societal progress and human rights.



Protests in Lahore after reports spread online that a student had been raped on a college campus [File: Arif Ali/AFP]

US Policies and Anti-Abortion Activism Threaten Women's Health Rights in Rural Nepal

Soman Rai, a pastor who founded the non-profit Voice of Fetus Nepal, holds up a model of a fetus during a presentation about why women shouldn't have abortions because it is killing a fetus, at a small church in the village of Shilaprabat, Sindhupalchok district, Nepal, 2017.



Photo Credit/Tara Todras-Whitehill/European Journalism Centre/Vignette Interactive)

The ongoing struggle for reproductive rights in Nepal illustrates the critical need for accessible, safe abortion services, especially given the risks unregulated procedures pose to women's lives. Abortion has been legal in Nepal since 2002, yet external pressures, particularly from policies influenced by American conservative ideologies, have continued to threaten access to these essential services. The Global Gag Rule (GGR), a U.S. policy that restricts foreign organizations receiving American funds from even discussing abortion, has impacted Nepal's healthcare system, disproportionately affecting rural and impoverished women who already have limited access to medical resources. The resurgence of anti-abortion campaigns within Nepal, aligned with these external pressures, compounds the challenges for women seeking safe healthcare and poses a tangible threat to their health and autonomy.

Abortion, as a part of comprehensive reproductive healthcare, is a fundamental right. Access to safe, legal abortion services is necessary not only to safeguard women's health but also to respect their autonomy over life choices. Without access to safe procedures, women are left to seek unregulated abortions, which significantly increase the risks of infections, complications, and even death. In Nepal, where 52% of abortions are reportedly conducted outside the legal framework, the lack of support and healthcare options has created a dire situation that undermines both health outcomes and human rights. Maternal mortality rates in Nepal have accelerated due to these unsafe conditions—a trend that mirrors findings worldwide that legal restrictions do not reduce the incidence of abortion but only make it more dangerous.

Supporting the right to safe abortion, particularly in rural regions where awareness and resources are limited, is essential to safeguarding women's rights. Investment in reproductive health education is critical, as misinformation and lack of knowledge allow anti-abortion narratives to flourish, especially in underserved communities. Strengthening partnerships between international health organizations and Nepali health authorities can help build a healthcare infrastructure that supports women's health rather than restricts it based on external political ideologies. If global powers aim to aid countries like Nepal, they must approach with an understanding that reproductive health is not simply a moral debate but a matter of human rights and survival.

Protecting Campus Free Speech: Urging Universities to Safeguard Student Rights Amid Protests

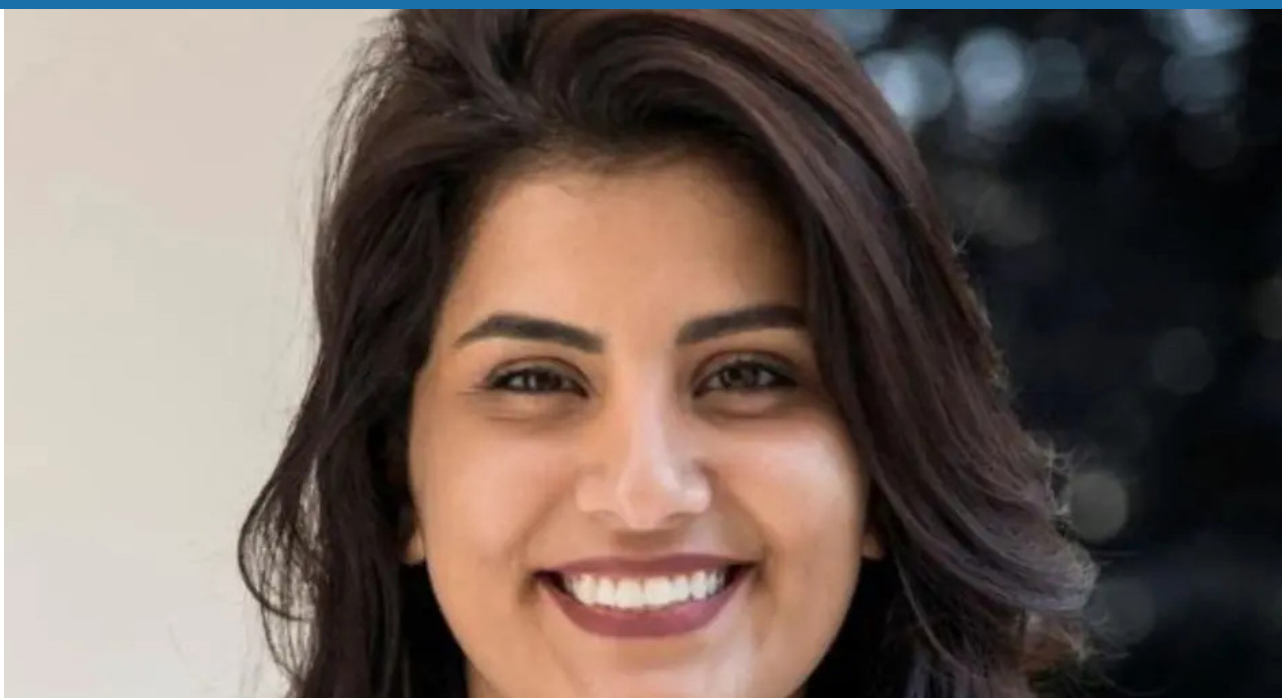
In response to reports of excessive force against student protests on U.S. campuses supporting Palestinian rights, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch (HRW) have jointly issued an open letter urging university leaders to protect the rights of students to assemble peacefully. The organization's letter highlights numerous documented instances of law enforcement using "less lethal" weapons such as pepper spray and rubber bullets, leading to serious injuries at prominent universities like UCLA, Columbia, and City College of New York. Amnesty's Digital Verification Corps has verified over 174 incidents from 20 universities, underscoring a troubling pattern of human rights abuses against peaceful protesters, directly violating international standards on freedom of assembly.

The groups recommend universities adopt restraint and prioritize de-escalation, emphasizing that police intervention should be a last resort. Additionally, the letter calls for an end to coercive measures that infringe on students' freedom of expression. This coalition of human rights organizations further stresses the global importance of protecting campus free speech, cautioning that violating these rights risks undermining academic freedom and democratic values. A comprehensive report on these findings is set for release by the ACLU and Amnesty, marking a crucial step in advocating for a safer environment for free expression on university campuses across the United States.



Pro-Palestinian demonstrators face off with Texas Department of Public Safety officers at the University of Texas at Austin in Austin, Texas, US, April 24, 2024. © 2024 Jordan Vonderhaar/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Demanding Justice: Saudi Arabia Urged to End Travel Bans on Women Human Rights Defenders



Prominent Saudi women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul was sentenced in December 2020 to nearly six years in prison for several offenses tied to her peaceful activism, including under the country's cybercrime law, which prohibits "producing something that harms public order, religious values, public morals, the sanctity of private life, or authoring, sending, or storing it via an information network." She was released in February 2021 but is banned from travel and has a suspended sentence, which allows the authorities to return her to prison at any time for any perceived criminal activity. © Abaca Press/Alamy Stock Photo

Human rights organizations are calling on Saudi authorities to halt their misuse of judicial and administrative measures against activists like Loujain al-Hathloul and Maryam al-Otaibi. Despite their release from prison, both face arbitrary travel bans that infringe on their freedom of movement, a right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Arab Charter on Human Rights. Al-Hathloul, a prominent women's rights advocate, has faced repeated delays in her efforts to lift the travel ban imposed upon her release in 2021. Despite the Saudi Travel Document Law, which mandates formal notification of travel restrictions, her ban has been extended without explanation.

Al-Otaibi, meanwhile, faced additional legal repercussions after publicly addressing her travel restrictions, resulting in her conviction under the Anti-Cybercrime Law and further limiting her freedom of expression.

These actions reveal Saudi Arabia's pattern of administrative harassment, often targeting the families of activists as well. UN experts have voiced concerns over these arbitrary restrictions, underscoring their inconsistency with international legal standards. Rights groups urge Saudi Arabia to lift these restrictions, respect legal processes, and allow independent monitors to investigate these violations, reinforcing the call for the Kingdom to uphold its commitment to human rights.

Civilian Crisis in Sudan: Escalating Violence in Gezira State Sparks International Outcry

In Sudan's Gezira state, escalating violence between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) has led to severe civilian suffering, with targeted attacks reported across towns including Tamboul, Rufaa, and Al-Hilaliya. Amnesty International, citing interviews with victims' relatives, revealed that RSF forces killed civilians in homes, marketplaces, and hospitals while looting properties and displacing thousands. The latest hostilities erupted following the defection of a former RSF commander, Abu Aqla Keikel, to the SAF, prompting the RSF to retaliate against communities in eastern Gezira.

These incidents constitute serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, forced displacement, and widespread sexual violence—25 cases of which were documented by the UN in Sharq Al-Jazira. Such actions contravene international laws protecting civilians during armed conflicts and highlight Sudan's urgent need for accountability and civilian protection. Amnesty International has called for an immediate halt to arms supplies to both sides and demands that all parties cease targeting non-combatants, grant civilians safe passage, and enable unrestricted humanitarian aid access.

To address these rights violations, the international community must strictly enforce the UN Security Council's arms embargo on Sudan, preventing further militarization of the conflict. Both the RSF and SAF should respect civilian rights by halting attacks and establishing humanitarian corridors for safe evacuations. Humanitarian agencies must be granted access to affected areas to provide critical aid, while Sudanese authorities and international actors work toward a peaceful resolution and civilian protection.



Sudan: Urgent need for civilian protection in wake of escalating violence

Billionaire Influence in U.S. Election Sparks Concerns Over Free Press and Democracy

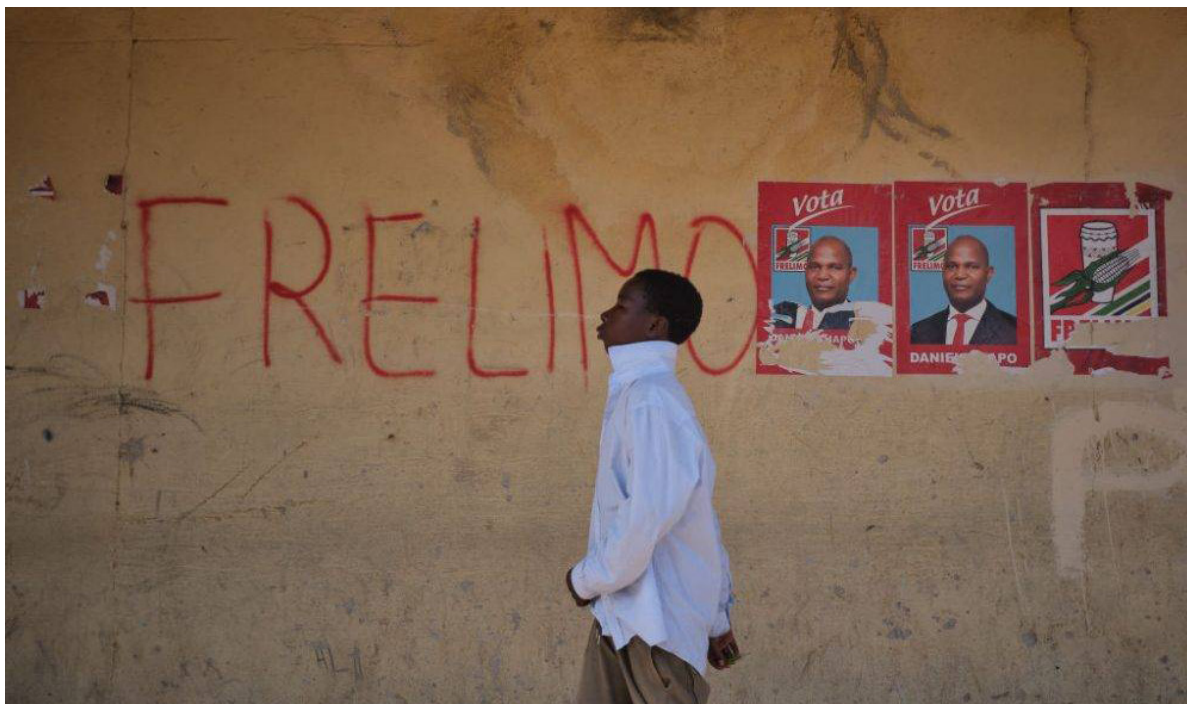
The upcoming U.S. election has seen billionaire involvement at unprecedented levels, with influential figures like Elon Musk, Patrick Soon-Shiong, and Jeff Bezos actively shaping political narratives through media control. Recent reports indicate Soon-Shiong and Bezos discouraged endorsements for Kamala Harris in the Los Angeles Times and Washington Post, raising concerns about owner influence on editorial freedom. Such interference disrupts journalistic independence, a cornerstone of a democratic society. The power of these billionaires to sway media narratives extends beyond passive funding, with some openly advocating for candidates, as Musk does for Donald Trump on his platform, X (formerly Twitter). This shift signals a departure from traditional, behind-the-scenes support, with wealthy elites increasingly visible in the campaign spotlight.

These actions highlight potential human rights concerns, particularly regarding freedom of expression and access to impartial news. The influence of billionaires over media discourse compromises journalistic integrity and raises fears of oligarchic control in politics. This influence threatens to replace genuine policy debates with culture wars and conspiracy rhetoric. Recommendations include reinforcing editorial independence protections within media organizations and encouraging regulatory oversight to ensure freedom of press principles are respected. The dangers of this trend parallel the past in other countries, such as Russia, where billionaire oligarchs lost their independence to political power. The rise of billionaire influence in U.S. media and elections risks compromising the integrity of democratic institutions, undermining public trust in free press, and endangering informed civic engagement.



Throw a rock at him: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at a rally in New Jersey. Photo: Michael M Santiago/Getty Images

SADC's Struggles with Democracy: A Wake-Up Call for Regional Integrity



recent elections, like Mozambique's, highlight the need for SADC to uphold rigorous democratic standards. (Photo by Mkhululi Thobela/Anadolu via Getty Images)

In 2024, nearly a third of African nations, many within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), are holding pivotal elections, underscoring citizens' deep-rooted desire for democratic stability. However, SADC's role in supporting free and fair elections is under scrutiny, particularly considering recent events in Mozambique. Although SADC principles advocate democratic standards, its limited observer presence and failure to condemn post-election violence reflect an inconsistent commitment. This inconsistency undermines citizens' trust and risks weakening regional stability. Despite an expressed commitment to democracy, only 37% of African citizens are satisfied with its functioning in their countries, indicating a democratic shortfall that SADC struggles to address.

The tragic deaths following Mozambique's October elections highlight a concerning gap in SADC's role as a democratic overseer. If credible, impartial oversight remains lacking, future elections risk descending into similar cycles of violence and unrest. This weakens citizens' commitment to democracy, erodes SADC's credibility, and potentially violates individuals' rights to political expression and participation free from intimidation or violence. Moving forward, SADC must enhance its election-monitoring framework, ensuring thorough and transparent observation. Additionally, it should foster a stronger inter-state commitment to uphold human rights and democratic integrity, particularly as regional mistrust grows, and younger generations demand accountable governance.

Safeguarding U.S. Democracy: Experts Warn of Election Subversion and Potential Violence

With the U.S. election approaching, concerns are mounting over the risk of election subversion and possible violence. In a recent episode of *Ripple Effect*, UCLA law professor Rick Hasen, who leads the Safeguarding Democracy Project, joined hosts Michael and Steve to analyze these threats and the sufficiency of recent electoral reforms. They examined former President Donald Trump's actions to overturn the 2020 election results, including the Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021, which showcased how fragile the democratic system can be under political pressure. Trump's persistent refusal to accept the election results, along with attempts to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the upcoming vote, raises fears about subversion efforts in the 2024 cycle.

The U.S. election system, with its decentralized nature and diverse voting methods, adds complexity and potential vulnerabilities that could be exploited. Hasen emphasized the importance of reinforcing electoral systems to counteract these risks, particularly given the tense political environment. The discussion raises concerns about the impact on citizens' fundamental rights, especially the right to free and fair elections. The threat of election subversion and potential violence near the polls jeopardizes the right to participate safely in the democratic process.

Protecting voters' rights is essential to democracy, and stronger legislative safeguards are recommended to prevent subversion. Lawmakers must ensure transparency, invest in security measures for polling places, and promote civic trust in the electoral process to counteract the current climate of distrust and division.

Trump's License Threats Highlight Dangers of Presidential Power Overreach

As the 2024 U.S. election intensifies, Donald Trump's repeated calls to revoke broadcast licenses for news outlets he criticizes are sparking significant concerns over press freedom, even in the United States—one of the world's most prominent democracies. These comments echo his 2017 criticisms of NBC News, where he questioned the media's right to operate on public airwaves. Trump's recent comments revive debates about the need for stronger protections to safeguard media independence, especially in election cycles when press freedom is crucial for an informed public. FCC Chair Jessica Rosenworcel has affirmed the agency's commitment to upholding the First Amendment, ensuring it will not target broadcasters over political disagreements. However, Trump's remarks—and his promises to centralize power over independent regulatory bodies like the FCC—signal a potential future where presidential authority might encroach upon journalistic freedom.

This concern is amplified by the scope of presidential emergency powers, notably under the "Doomsday Book" of emergency powers. Section 706 of the Communications Act grants the president control over airwaves and internet infrastructure in times of national crisis, a power Trump could leverage to target critical media outlets under a broad or politically influenced interpretation of "national security." Trump's stance that Article II gives him the "right to do whatever I want as president" underlines the risk of unchecked executive authority, particularly if emergency powers are employed to stifle media scrutiny.

Freedom of the press is foundational to democratic governance and human rights. For the United States—a country built on democratic values—to consider restricting media outlets during elections raises fundamental questions about its commitment to these principles. Congress, as a key oversight body, should prioritize a closer examination of executive emergency powers, reinforcing clear limits and definitions of "national emergency" to prevent potential abuses. As the election unfolds, ensuring media independence remains protected is essential to preserve democracy's integrity and uphold the U.S.'s standing as a global advocate for human rights and freedom of speech.



Former President Donald Trump speaks with reporters in the spin room at the Pennsylvania Convention Center after the ABC News Presidential Debate between him and Vice President Kamala Harris in Philadelphia, PA on Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2024. Josh Morgan/USA TODAY Network via Imagin Images

From Soldier to Security Threat: How Online Radicalization Breached U.S. Military Ranks

Cole Bridges, a U.S. Army soldier sentenced to 14 years in prison for attempting to support ISIS in an ambush against his own troops, represents a troubling example of how online radicalization can infiltrate even the most secure institutions. Arrested in 2021, Bridges was convicted of providing military advice to people he believed were linked to ISIS. The case underscores the real-world danger posed by online radicalization, where extremist propaganda is readily accessible and can turn susceptible individuals into security



FILE - The outside of the U.S. Department of Justice building in Washington. A U.S. Army soldier was sentenced to 14 years in prison for attempting to help the Islamic State conduct a deadly ambush of U.S. troops, the department said on Friday.

risks. With Bridges, who had consumed extremist content before joining the military, the issue becomes even more complex, as it reveals potential gaps in screening and counter-radicalization efforts within security-sensitive institutions. This sentencing also serves as a strong reminder of the government's commitment to countering domestic terrorism, particularly in environments meant to protect national security.

Social media has become a formidable tool for extremist groups, enabling them to reach global audiences. ISIS, despite losing physical territory, has maintained a robust online presence, using propaganda that appeals to individuals seeking purpose or community. Social media platforms allow extremists to exploit psychological vulnerabilities, normalizing radical ideas and engaging individuals in ways that make them susceptible to dangerous ideologies. As Bridges' case demonstrates, online radicalization does not just affect vulnerable individuals in isolated areas; it can penetrate all levels of society and institutions, turning someone into a direct threat to public safety and human rights.

Preventing such online radicalization requires multifaceted approaches. Strengthening media literacy, improving content moderation, and encouraging critical thinking can all serve as preventive measures. For institutions like the military, enhanced psychological screening and ongoing counter-radicalization programs are essential. If these measures are not put in place, individuals anywhere in the world, exposed to unchecked propaganda, may become threats, with far-reaching impacts on global safety and human rights.

Deadly Toll on Press Freedom: Mexican Journalists Face Rising Violence



<https://www.voanews.com/a/mexican-journalists-shot-dead-in-past-24-hours/7845835.html>

The recent murders of Mexican journalists Patricia Ramirez and Mauricio Cruz within 24 hours highlight the extreme dangers faced by the press in Mexico, especially in areas plagued by cartel violence and a lack of accountability. Patricia Ramirez, also known as “Paty Bunbury,” was an entertainment reporter shot in Colima, and Mauricio Cruz, head of the online news outlet MinutoXMinuto Michoacan, was killed in Uruapan, Michoacan, one of the country’s most dangerous regions due to ongoing cartel conflicts. Their deaths mark the first journalist killings since Claudia Sheinbaum took office as Mexico’s president after she promised to address the nation’s violence crisis without engaging in an all-out war against the cartels.

Mexico is one of the deadliest countries for journalists, a reality driven by drug cartels fighting for control and targeting reporters who uncover crime, corruption, or violence. Organizations like the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) have long highlighted these risks, noting that perpetrators are rarely punished. Without effective protection, journalism in Mexico has become a life-threatening profession.

Sheinbaum’s approach to following the prior administration’s strategy of selective policing and social programs rather than confrontation with cartels raises concerns about press freedom. Critics argue that if the government doesn’t take firm action to protect journalists, the right to free press—and by extension, the public’s right to information—will be in grave jeopardy. As the killings continue, questions are bound to arise about the new administration’s effectiveness in distinguishing itself from the previous one, especially if the rights and lives of those seeking the truth are left unprotected.

Cameroon's War on Dissent and the Right to Free Speech

Cameroon's recent ban on discussions regarding President Paul Biya's health, enforced by Minister of Territorial Administration Paul Atanga Nji, marks a substantial infringement on free speech in the country. Announced on October 9, this decree labels any commentary on the president's health a "security issue," with media outlets facing legal repercussions for breaching it. This move has sparked criticism from journalists and opposition leaders, who argue it represents a regression in democratic freedoms. The order arrives amid widespread speculation about Biya's well-being—he has not been seen publicly for over a month, prompting rumors of illness or even death. Authorities, however, dismiss these claims, insisting the 91-year-old president is in good health and currently taking a "brief private stay in Europe."

This restrictive measure is not unprecedented; it follows a history of suppression aimed at stifling dissent, particularly as Cameroon's 2025 presidential elections approach. In early 2023, the government banned two opposition coalitions, labeling them "clandestine movements," and detained notable figures like artist Aboubacar Siddiki, who allegedly insulted a governor. Social media activists, including Junior Ngombe and Ramon Cotta, have faced arbitrary arrests, with reports of torture in Cotta's case for advocating democratic reforms. These actions reflect a broader pattern of repression seen under Biya's administration, which has governed since 1982.

Freedom of expression, protected under international human rights law, is essential for democratic systems. Although restrictions are permitted, they must be necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory—a standard this decree fails to uphold. With



elections on the horizon, silencing public discourse risks further eroding public trust and transparency. Instead of quashing free speech, the Cameroonian government would benefit from promoting open dialogue, allowing citizens to engage actively in political discourse.

Cameroon President Paul Biya. © 2018 Lintao Zhang/Pool Photo via AP, File

The Human Rights Crisis Following Imran Khan's Imprisonment



Police officers fire tear gas to disperse the supporters of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf party, during a protest in Islamabad, Pakistan, October 5, 2024. © 2024 W.K. Yousafzai/AP Photo

The recent crackdown on PTI supporters protesting the imprisonment of former Prime Minister Imran Khan underscores an increasingly fraught conflict between Pakistani authorities and the political opposition. Since Khan's ouster in 2022, Pakistan has faced escalating political tensions, peaking with his arrest in May 2023 on corruption and state secrecy charges. Following his conviction and ban from the February 2024 elections, Khan's supporters have organized large protests, especially given that PTI-backed candidates won the most seats in these elections but lacked the numbers to form a government alone.

On October 5, Islamabad witnessed violent clashes between police and PTI supporters, as authorities used tear gas, roadblocks, and a mobile internet shutdown to quell protests, resulting in over 500 arrests. Observers likened the capital to a "war zone," with confrontations involving stones and, allegedly, firearms. While the government defends its actions as necessary for public safety, human rights advocates argue that many detained were peaceful demonstrators. These incidents come amid night raids targeting PTI leaders, which further fuel the country's political unrest.

Despite Pakistan's claims of being a democratic state, recent events suggest this is largely rhetorical. Democratic principles appear in turmoil, as citizens face restricted rights to peaceful assembly, due process, and freedom of expression. The government's reliance on ambiguous laws, like charges for "threats to public order," appears more a means to suppress dissent than to protect public welfare. High levels of censorship, lack of transparency in legal proceedings, and broad crackdowns on free speech all point to a concerning erosion of democratic freedoms. Human rights advocates warn that if Pakistan continues to suppress peaceful protest and dissent, it risks further destabilizing its democracy, underscoring the need to protect fundamental rights to prevent even deeper divisions.



Deadly Suicide Bombing in Northwest Pakistan Leaves 8 Dead

Around a dozen militants were eliminated during anti-terrorism operations by the security forces in the North Waziristan district this month. Credit: Reuters File Photo

The recent suicide bombing in North Waziristan's Mir Ali town, which tragically claimed the lives of eight people, underscores a troubling resurgence of violence in Pakistan's border regions. Among those killed were two soldiers, four police officers, and two civilians, while multiple others remain critically injured. The blast, attributed to Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), involved a motorbike rickshaw filled with explosives detonated at a security checkpoint. This assault follows a series of deadly incidents in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, with TTP-led attacks intensifying since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.

The TTP, often called the Pakistani Taliban, has a complex history intertwined with both regional and international conflicts. The group previously harbored Afghan Taliban leaders, coordinating attacks on U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan. However, with the U.S. withdrawal, the TTP has focused its operations within Pakistan, especially targeting security forces and checkpoints along the porous Afghan border. According to reports, over 1,000 lives have been lost this year to militant violence, with nearly half being security personnel.

Human rights are significantly compromised by such militant attacks, as civilians in these regions are forced to live under constant threat, with little protection. Many people in affected areas face restrictions on their freedom of movement, disruption of basic services,

and limited access to essential resources. The deaths of civilians and security personnel alike highlight how extremist violence undermines the right to life and security—a core tenet of human rights. These acts disrupt the fabric of daily life, perpetuating cycles of violence that stifle individual freedoms and communal stability.

Cross-border terrorism complicates these human rights abuses further by straining Pakistan's border regions, where unchecked militant operations highlight a stark disregard for national sovereignty and democratic values. The TTP's continuous targeting of security forces undermines the state's authority, weakening public confidence in the government's ability to maintain order and protect its citizens. Such destabilizing acts erode the democratic framework, infringing on citizens' rights to security and political participation in a peaceful, lawful society. As militant groups exploit porous borders, they not only threaten regional stability but also encourage a climate in which authoritarian responses—often justified as necessary for security—may override democratic principles like accountability, transparency, and the protection of civil liberties.

Moreover, the TTP's violent ideology and oppressive actions stand in direct opposition to democratic values, particularly those promoting peaceful discourse and human dignity. Cross-border militancy fuels an environment where violence becomes a means of political expression, stifling the voices of those advocating for peaceful change and democratic engagement. When such ideologies gain ground, they create a chilling effect, discouraging individuals from participating in democratic processes due to fear of reprisal or harm.



SECTION - 3:

Multimedia Update: Voices Against Authoritarianism

Multimedia Update: Voices Against Authoritarianism

Write ups by International Human Rights Certificate Program Participants

In this month's *Multimedia Corner*, we're thrilled to feature insightful articles from participants of our Human Rights Certificate Program. Each article delves into the pressing issues shaping their respective countries and regions:

- **The Children of Lesser God: A Case of Religious Minorities in Pakistan by Gohar Ali Iftikhar**

This piece examines the hardships faced by religious minorities in Pakistan, bringing attention to the injustices and systemic challenges impacting these communities.

- **Afghan Women's Education Crisis: A Clarion Call by Aman Shah Kabiri**

Kabiri explores the ongoing education crisis for Afghan women, especially following the Taliban's resurgence, highlighting the barriers to education and empowerment they face.

- **From Harmony to Hate: The Impact of Extremism on Cross-Sect Marriages in Gilgit-Baltistan by Imtiaz Ahmed**

Ahmed's article discusses the deteriorating social harmony in Gilgit-Baltistan, where rising extremism has cast a shadow over cross-sect marriages, creating new divides in communities once bound by unity.

Don't miss these compelling reads—explore each article to deepen your understanding of these critical issues.

Scholarly | A Podcast for Defending Freedom & Countering Extremism

An engaging new podcast series hosted by *Prof. Ahrar Ramizpoor*, President of the World Anti Extremism Network. Each episode brings together distinguished voices from across the globe, from experts and thought leaders to active changemakers, delivering insights on combating authoritarianism, defending liberal democracy, and promoting pluralism. With every discussion, *Scholarly* offers practical, real-world solutions for dismantling the roots of radicalization and strengthening democratic values.

In our debut episode, we are thrilled to feature *Tom G. Palmer*, an American libertarian theorist, author, and Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. Palmer discusses the profound impacts of authoritarian rule on society and shares innovative approaches to uphold freedom and democratic principles in challenging times.

Whether you're a policymaker, researcher, or simply interested in understanding today's pressing issues, *Scholarly* is your essential resource for pioneering perspectives on freedom and resilience.

Listen to the debut episode with Tom G. Palmer now!



SECTION - 4:

Updates corner

Updates corner

International Human Rights Certificate Program for Young Leaders | December Edition

- Imagine the courage it takes for young leaders to demand freedom in places shadowed by authoritarian rule. To support advocates like these, the World Anti-Extremism Network (WAEN) proudly offers the International Human Rights Certificate Program—a unique, four-week opportunity to learn directly from leading global experts. After completing three editions and empowering nearly one hundred aspiring human rights defenders, we are thrilled to announce that registration is now open for the fourth edition, set to launch in December. Don't miss your chance to gain critical skills for defending human rights and strengthening democracy! The deadline to apply is **November 28**. Start your journey with WAEN—[register today](#) and make a lasting impact

Toronto Democracy Forum 2024

- In an age where extremism threatens the very essence of democracy, standing together has never been more crucial. Extremist ideologies have not only polarized societies but have weakened the democratic institutions we rely on for stability, freedom, and justice. This November, we're gathering the brightest minds and boldest voices to address these challenges at the **Toronto Democracy Forum 2024**, an exclusive conference on **November 24-25** in vibrant Toronto, Canada.

Join us as we bring together renowned voices like **Tom G. Palmer**, **Mustafa Akyol**, **Kyle Matthews**, **Peter Copeland**, and other prominent experts from around the world. Hosted at the **University of Toronto**, in partnership with the **Macdonald-Laurier Institute**, **the Institute for Liberal Studies**, and **Students for a Free Iran**, this forum promises two days of groundbreaking discussions, collaborative solutions, and forward-thinking strategies on strengthening democracy against the forces of extremism.

With the registration deadline approaching on **November 12**, don't miss the chance to join this gathering of changemakers, policymakers, and activists dedicated to advancing democratic values and countering radicalization.

[Secure your spot](#), join the conversation, and be part of the change!



SECTION - 5:

Brainstorming Time

Brainstorming Time

If you had the authority to decide, how would you handle travel restrictions placed on individuals for their peaceful activism, considering both national security and international human rights standards? What steps would you take to ensure fair treatment while addressing any security concerns?

Please submit your responses to the question at research@worldantiextremism.org with the subject line: *Brainstorming Time: Response to the Question*. Your answer should be between 100-150 words. Kindly include your full name and country at the end of your response.

The most insightful submission will be recognized in the upcoming edition of "Uncensored Watch."

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