

PEC Condemns Misuse of PRESS Emblem and Ongoing Journalist Killings



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The Press Emblem Campaign (PEC), a global media safety and rights organization, has strongly condemned the misuse of the “PRESS” symbol by armed combatants in conflict zones such as Syria and Gaza. The PEC expressed deep concern over incidents where individuals posing as journalists have used the emblem as a shield for violent activities.

In southern Syria, Islamist fighters were seen wearing jackets marked “PRESS” while vandalizing a Druze household in Suwayda, as shown in a widely circulated video on social media. While PEC cannot independently verify the authenticity of the video, it emphasizes that under no circumstances should the press emblem be used as cover for armed combatants.

A similar situation is reportedly occurring in Gaza, where Hamas fighters have allegedly disguised themselves as journalists. This tactic, the PEC warns, could put genuine media professionals at increased risk, potentially providing military forces—such as the Israeli army—a pretext to target media workers. “Journalists must have guaranteed and safe access to conflict zones,” said PEC president Blaise Lempen, stressing that misuse of media symbols jeopardizes this principle.

Lempen further revealed a disturbing statistic: since 1 January 2025, a total of **92 journalists and media workers** have been killed worldwide—marking a sharp increase from previous years. He called for immediate and impartial investigations into all such murders to ensure justice for the victims.

PEC's South and Southeast Asia representative, **Nava Thakuria**, reported the recent killing of Indian journalist **Chintakayalu Naresh Kumar**, who was associated with the YouTube channel *Times Odia*. Kumar was fatally attacked by a group of miscreants in the Muruliguda area of Odisha on **12 July**. The police have arrested two suspects—**Sukumar Ray** and **Konkan Jordar**—in connection with the case.

Earlier this year, India also witnessed the killings of **Mukesh Chandrakar**, **Raghavendra Vajpayee**, **Sahadev Dey**, and **Dharmendra Singh Chauhan**, highlighting an alarming trend of targeted violence against journalists in the country.

PEC reiterates its demand for strong legal action against the perpetrators and urges governments worldwide to uphold the safety and rights of journalists.

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