

PEC expresses concern over sealing of UNI office in Delhi



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Press Emblem Campaign (PEC), the global media safety and rights body, expresses concern over sealing of the office of United News of India (UNI, one of the country's oldest news agencies) in New Delhi on Friday and urged the concerned parties to reconsider the decision. According to the local media outlets, the closing down of the UNI office raised serious concerns over press freedom in the largest democracy on Earth. It was also reported that some staff members on duty were forcibly evicted and even female journalists faced manhandling by a team of Delhi police personnel.

The action was taken following an order from Delhi high court as it upheld the cancellation of the land allotment to the UNI for failing the condition to construct a composite office complex for the news agency and a few other media bodies. The particular plot of land, measuring around 5,289 square meters at 9, Rafi Marg, was allotted to the UNI management in December 1979 with the condition to erect the office building within a stipulated time period, but it was never realized

So the government cancelled the permits in March 2023. The aggrieved party challenged the cancellation in the court, but finally it did not receive any positive direction. A notice pasted on the UNI office reads that the premises was taken over by the Union government in New Delhi on 20 March 2026 following the court ruling. Any entry, occupation, or use of the premises by any person without authorisation was also strictly prohibited which would invite legal actions, added the notice.

“It’s unfortunate that a pioneer news agency (which was founded in 1961) is facing such treatments in India. However, the UNI management had to follow the prescribed regulations. Since the digital media overpowers the traditional news outlets, which was aggravated after the Covid-19 pandemic, the news agencies needed a complete revamps in its functioning. Probably the UNI management failed to deal with challenges,” said Nava Thakuria, south Asia representative of PEC (<https://www.presseblem.ch/pec-news>).

A number of social media posts had termed the action as very unfortunate for the Indian press freedom. The police personnel arriving in hundreds simply ‘stormed, seized and silenced’ the UNI office in the capital city, where they treated the media professionals almost like wanted criminals. They could (should) have been asked to vacate the office and then locked the campus, added Thakuria, but it was not done.

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