

Threat analysis report

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1 Introduction

Despite many challenges democratic principles are being systematically implemented in the Maldives. Counting on the liberties facilitated through the introduction of democracy; enabling media freedom is seen as one of the most fundamental. In order to protect and nurture the media industry it was seen as absolutely necessary to identify the challenges and address the issues faced by media. Therefore, the Maldives Broadcasting Commission undertook the task of publishing a Threat Analysis Report based on data collected from the period between: 1st January 2011 to 30th December 2013.

2 Aim

The aim of the “Threat Analysis Report” is to determine whether the environment in which media operated was conducive for the freedom of media enshrined in the Constitution of Maldives. The report will analyze threats and risks to journalists and identify the root cause of the issues and put forward recommendations.

The report will mainly look into the following categories;

1. Obstacles to safety and protection of journalists.
2. Obstacles to freedom of media
3. Challenges and obstacles to Right to Information

In order to analyze the above mentioned points, data will be gathered on the challenges to media freedom and threats to broadcast journalists, their equipment and assets of the broadcast stations. Data will be gathered starting from January 2011.

3 Methodology

- In the first stage of the research a team from the Commission carried out face-to-face interview sessions with a number of journalists.
- In the second phase, the journalists were given a survey form developed to collect specific information.
- The data obtained through the survey has been utilized to generate the statistics.
- In addition to this letters were sent to relevant authorities to gather additional information.

4 Analyzing Data

4.1 First Phase: Interviewing executives from stations

In the first phase carried out from 27 March to 18 April 2013, a team from the Commission visited broadcast stations and interviewed the heads of stations. Among the stations visited and heads interviewed include Raaje TV, MBC (Maldives Broadcasting Commission and Voice of Maldives), DhiTV, VMedia (VTV and VFM), Radio Atoll and MVTV.

Overall conclusion from all stations interviewed believed that there exists barriers to media freedom. Listed below are threats to media freedom which the stations have highlighted;

- Obstacles to journalists in covering protests and volatile situations.
 - Obstacles to right to information
 - Pre- planned physical attacks on journalists.
 - Attacks on property and assets of the stations.
 - Threats from the public.
- Those channels which focus on broadcasting local and international current affairs have highlighted that they are not fully aware where exactly the threats originate

from. However they believe that threats are generated mainly due to the political instability of the country.

- Some of the commercial broadcasters have highlighted that they receive threats from the security forces, the public as well as from political parties.
- The TV channels which focus their content specifically on religious and social development noted that they do not receive any form of threat.
- Overall, all stations interviewed agrees that they do not receive threats from competitive channels.
- The following are perception of the stations as reasons for threats received by the media;
 - Politicians trying to seize control of media to secure their own interest.
 - Failure to uphold ethical standards and professional reporting in bringing news especially during times of political instability in the country,
 - MNDF, the defense force publicly stating that they will not provide protection to certain stations.
 - Limited opportunities for alternate views points.
- All the stations interviewed highlighted that they do inform concerned authorities of threats they receive in the past.
- Stations which received threats agree that progress have been made in the investigations in relation to the incidents they report. However the news media channels agree that expected level of cooperation from the authorities are not there to bring those behind the attacks to justice.
- All stations said there is no influence to the news content by the financiers. They also noted that they operate the station based on revenue generated. The public broadcasting channel, MBC stated that there is no state influence in their content.
- When interviewees were asked to rate the independence of their editorial content (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the most independent) they all rated themselves as 5. They all stated that there is no influence in the editorial content and the content are being aired according to the guidelines.
- All media stations have admitted that it is difficult to obtain information from Government and State organizations.

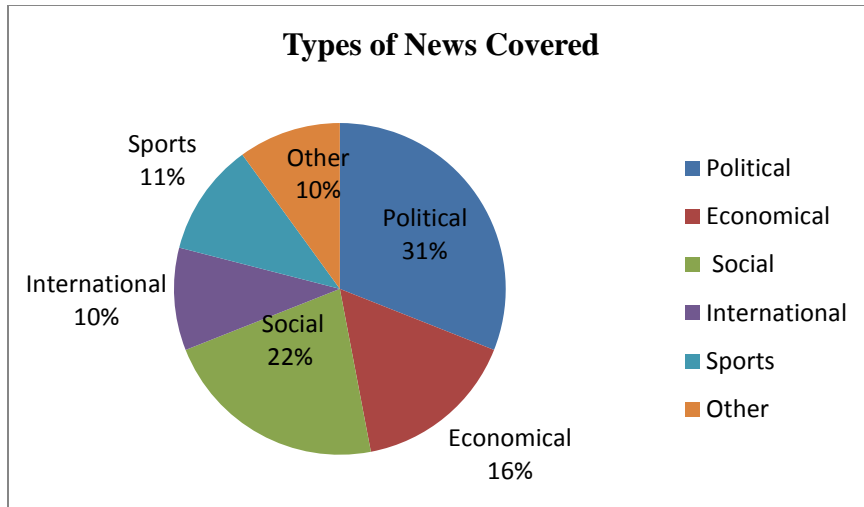
- All media stations agreed that in the near future, the threat towards media will only increase. The attacks on journalists will also increase. Even though the number of minor attacks is lesser, the gravity of each attack is more vicious.
- The reasons why they believe that the attacks on media is set to increase is due to the instability of the political situation, gang violence, differences of opinion on religious matters, the increase in the number of media channels and lack of trained journalists.
- When asked if journalists/presenters are hesitant to handle a particular content, the heads of the stations stated journalists are hesitant to report news related to gang violence. They highlight that there have been cases of threat and intimidation to the stations when such issues are reported in the news.
- The public service broadcast channels and commercial channels stated that they face financial challenges and believe they have financial threats as well.
- All broadcast media channels to an extent believe that local media is biased, un-ethical and lack professionalism in reporting news.
- The public service broadcaster, Maldives Broadcasting Corporation believes their threat level is at 20%.
- Among the commercial stations which air news and current affairs programs (VTV, Raajje TV and DhiTV) believe that they have a threat level above 50%.
- Among these channels, VTV and DhiTV perceive they have the highest threat level which is at 80%.
- Raajje TV considers their threat level to be at 60%.
- MVTV, which air religious and social programs believe that their threat level is at 40%

4.2 Second Phase: Survey targeted at the journalists

- 58 participants from nine broadcast stations took part in the survey and completed the survey forms. This section will highlight the data which was obtained from the survey.

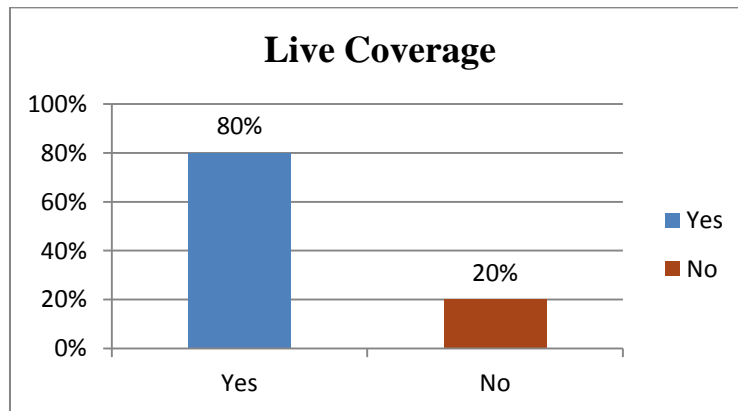
4.2.1 Types of news being covered

- 31% of the journalists who took part in this survey covered political content.
- 22% of the journalists covered content related to social issues.
- 16% of the journalists covered content related to economy,
- 11% of the journalists covered content related to sports.
- 10% of the journalists covered news related to international and other news.



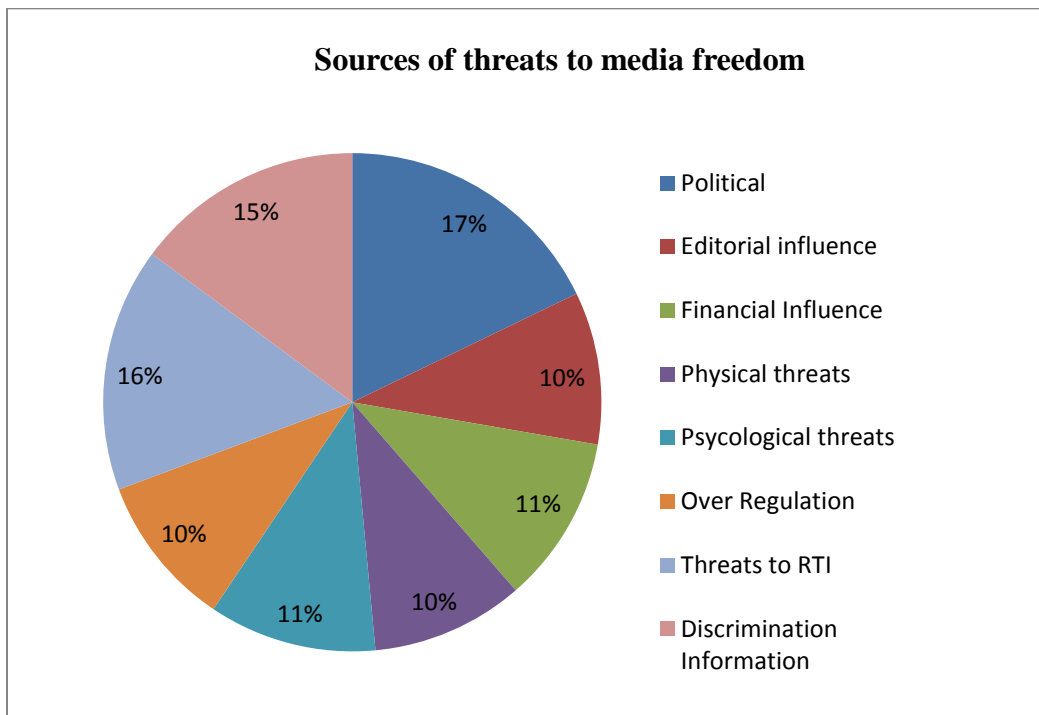
4.2.2 Live coverage

Among the journalists who took the survey, 80% of them are involved in covering live events



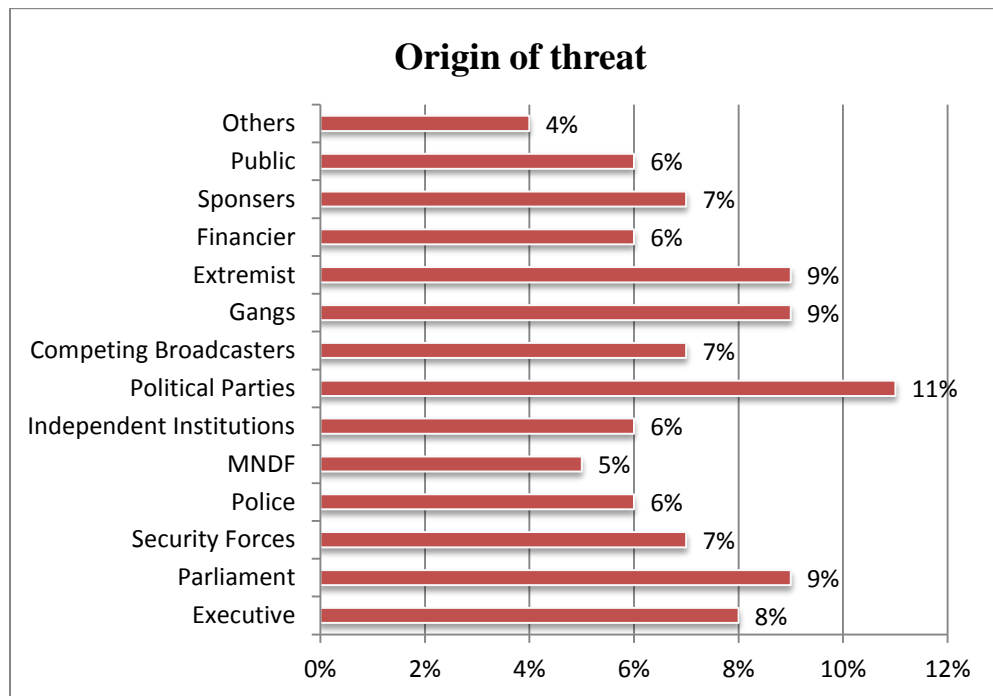
4.2.3 Obstacles to media freedom

- According to the data obtained, the biggest obstacle to media freedoms are from politicians. Threats from politicians constitute 17%. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest threat level and 1 being the lowest. The threat from politicians stood at 4.1
- The second biggest obstacle to media freedom was access to information which stood at 16%. On the scale of 5-0, journalists rated this as 3.7.
- Third major obstacle is discrimination in disseminating information. While it stands at 15% On the scale of 5-0 the rating stood at 3.5.
- Physical and Psychological threats constitute 11%. While the lowest threats seem to come in the form of regulation and editorial threats.



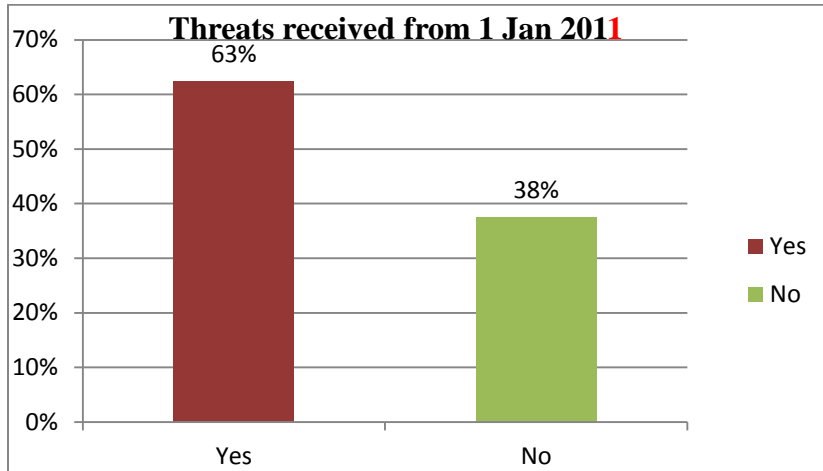
4.2.4 Origin of threat

- The survey findings point out that the biggest threat to media freedom originates from political parties with a standing of 11%. While the second biggest threat with 9% comes from extremists, gang and law makers. While 8% of threat is believed to originate from executive level influence. 7% of threat is believed to originate from sponsors, rival broadcasters and security forces. Police, Financier, independent institutions and the public is perceived to pose a 6% threat, while the National Defense Force poses a threat of 5%.



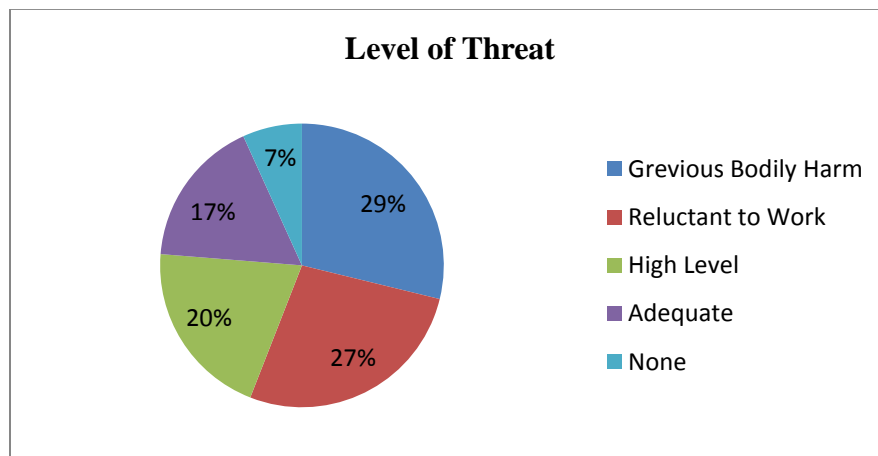
4.2.5 Threats received from 1st January 2012

From 1st January 2011 on , 63% of the journalists highlighted that they received various kinds of threats. While 38%, said they received no threats.



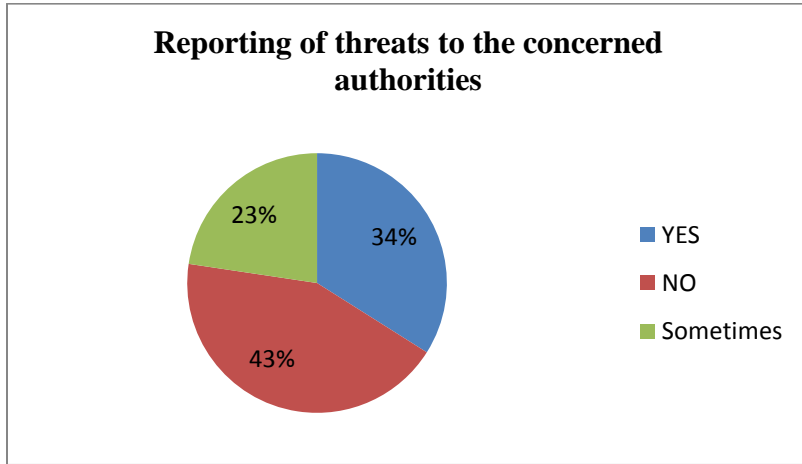
4.2.6 Level of threat

According to the journalists who took part in the survey, based on the current environment they perceive grievous bodily harm and threats to life of journalists at 29%. While journalists say 27% of threats were intimidation related to their work. And 20% of those who took the survey said the threats were very serious and 17% of them think that the level of threat is moderate. While 7% of those who took the survey maintain that there are no threats at all.



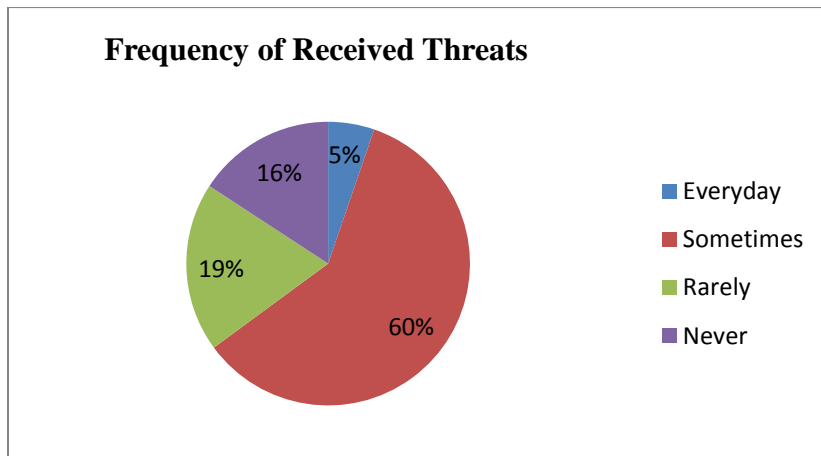
4.2.7 Reporting Threats to the Concerned Authorities

34% of the journalists who took the survey said that they reported the threats to the concerned authorities. While 43% of the participants said they did not report the threat. And 23% of the journalists maintained that they reported certain threats while they did not report others.



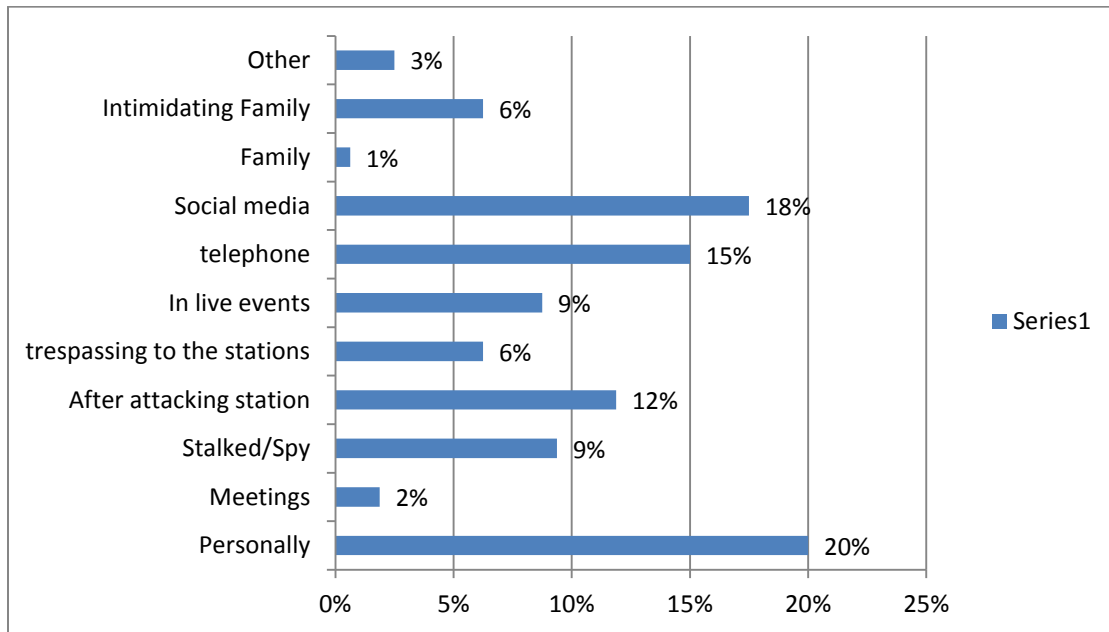
4.2. Frequency of Threats

Based on the survey, 5% maintain that they received threats every day. While 60% of them said they face threats often. 19% of the journalists said they face threats rarely. And 16% of the journalists said they did not face any type of threat.



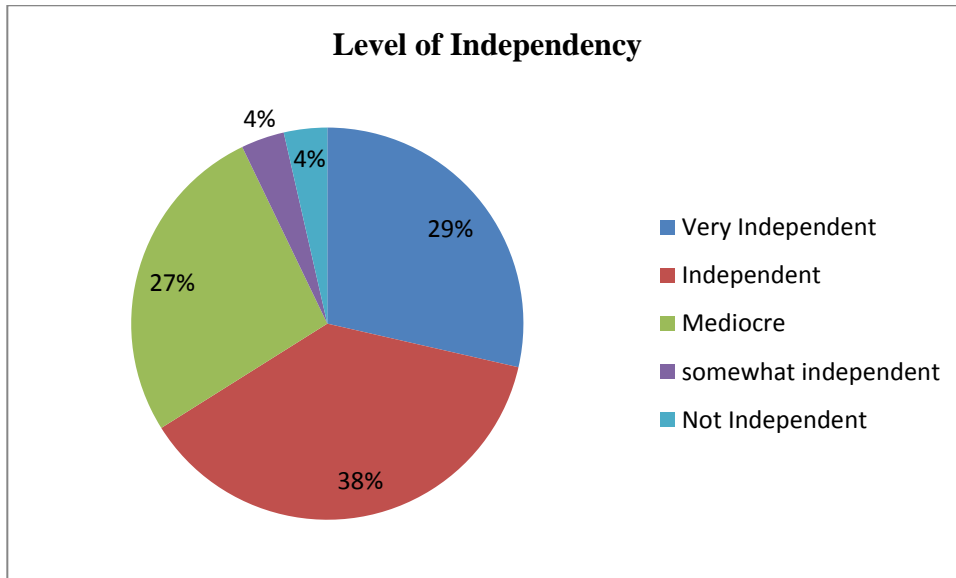
4.2.9 How threats are faced

Among those who participated in the survey, 20% of them say that they receive threats when they are seen in public. 18% of the journalists related that they receive threats through social media. While 15% of the journalists say they receive threats via phone calls, 12% of the journalists maintain they receive threats through attacks to their station. While 9% of the journalists say they receive threats in the form of spying/stalking, the other 9% of them stated that they receive threats while covering live events. 6% of the journalists said they receive threats from attackers coming into the stations and 6% stated that they also receive threats to their families. 3% of the journalists say the threats come from various sources. While 2% of the journalists say they receive threats when they meet. And 1% of the journalists say they also have to face threats from their own family.



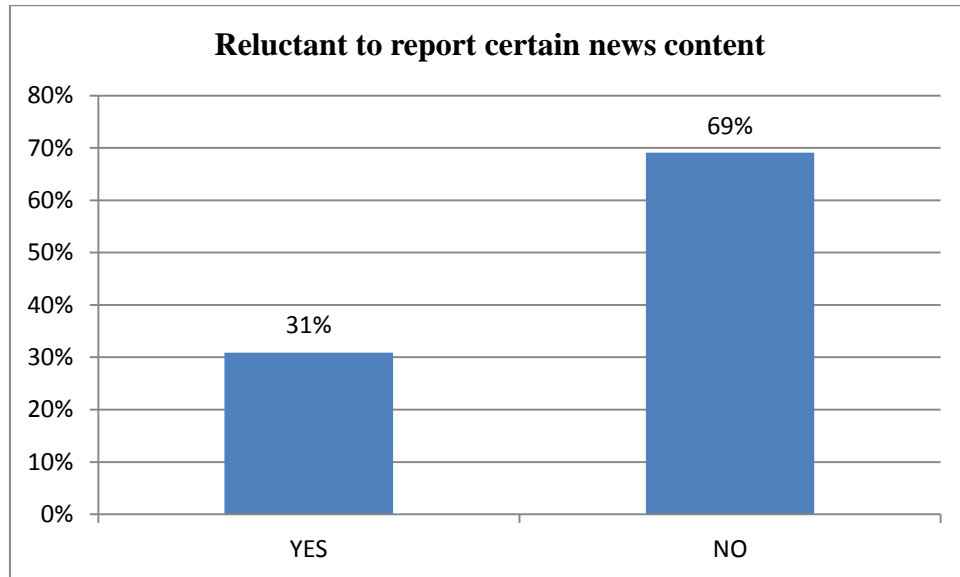
4.2.10. Editorial independence

38% of the journalists who took part in the survey said they have editorial independence. While 29% of the journalists said they have a very high level of editorial independence. 27% of the journalists maintain that editorial independence is moderate, while 4% highlighted that there is editorial independence to lesser degree and 4% maintained that there is no editorial independence.



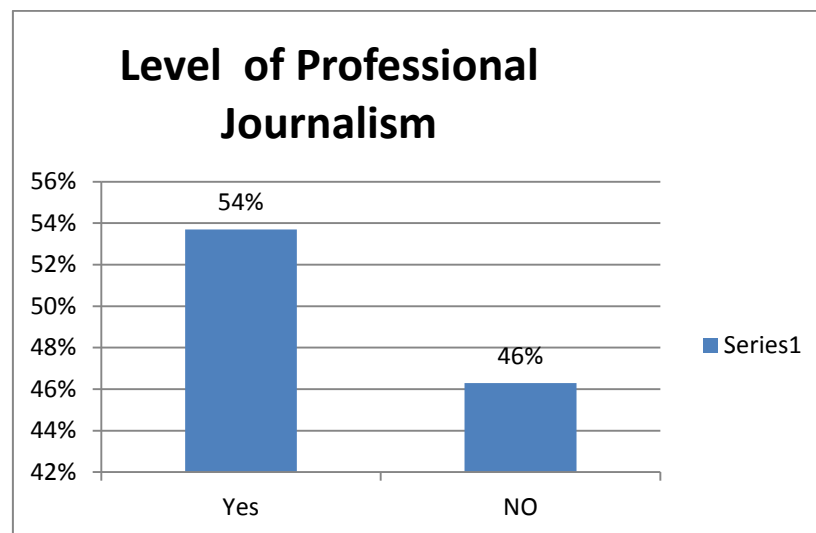
4.2.11 Reluctant to report certain news content

69% of journalists who took the survey said they are not hesitant to report any news content. While 31% of those who took the survey said they are hesitant to report on certain news topics. News beats they are reluctant to report on include gang related news and reports of gang attacks.



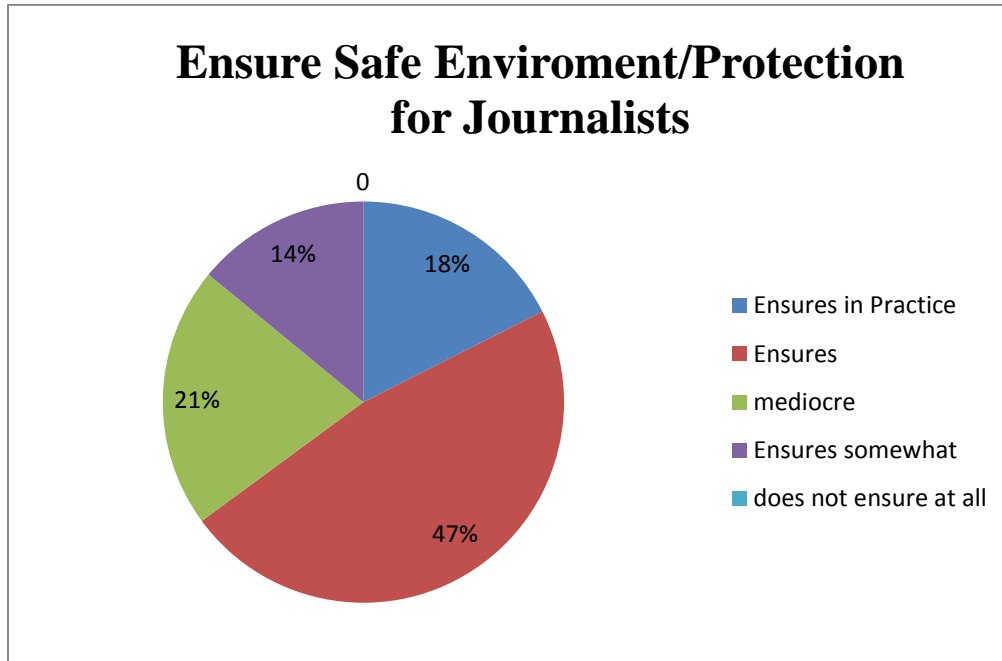
4.2.12 Conducive environment to practice independent and ethical journalism

Among the journalists who participated in the survey, 54% believes that the media stations support to create an environment to nurture independent and ethical journalism. While 46% of them say the media stations do not support to create an environment to nurture independent and ethical journalism.



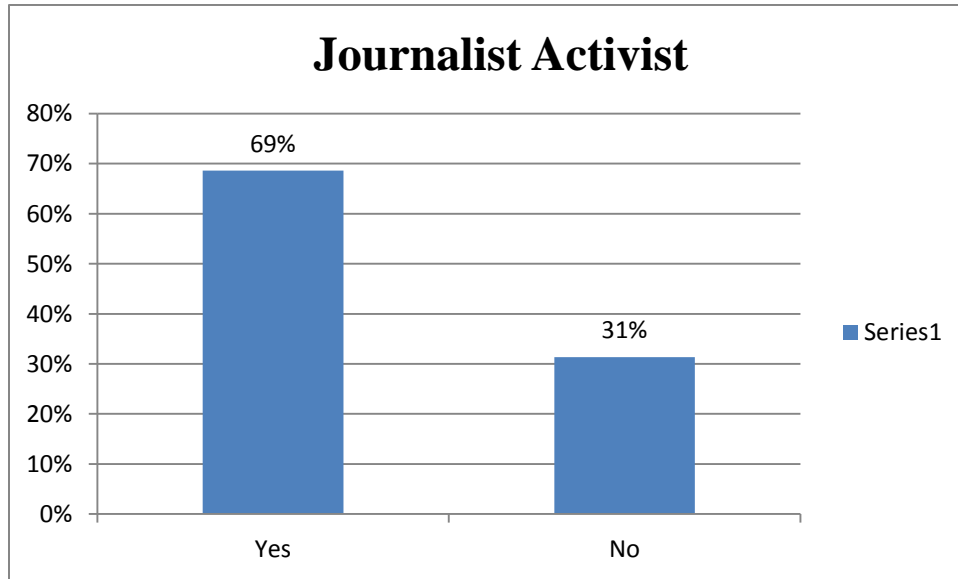
4.2.13 Level of security and safety established in the work environment

Around 18% of the journalists feel that their stations are working to establish a secure and safe environment for the journalists. 47% of the journalists state that their working environment is safe. While 21% of the journalists think that the environment they work is moderately safe. While 14% of the journalists think that the environment is somewhat safe.



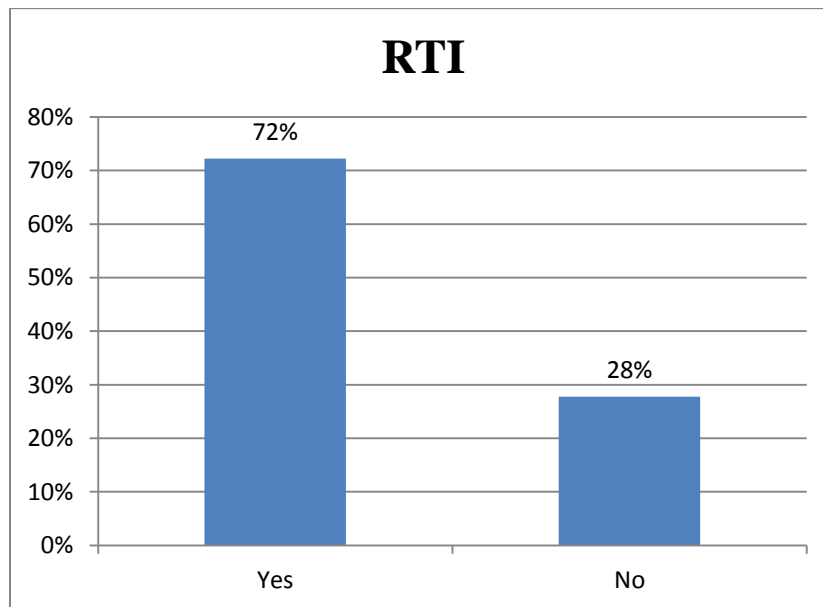
4.2.14 Activist journalists

According to journalists who took part in the survey, 69% believes that journalist activists exist in Maldives. While the other 31% believes that journalist activists do not exist.



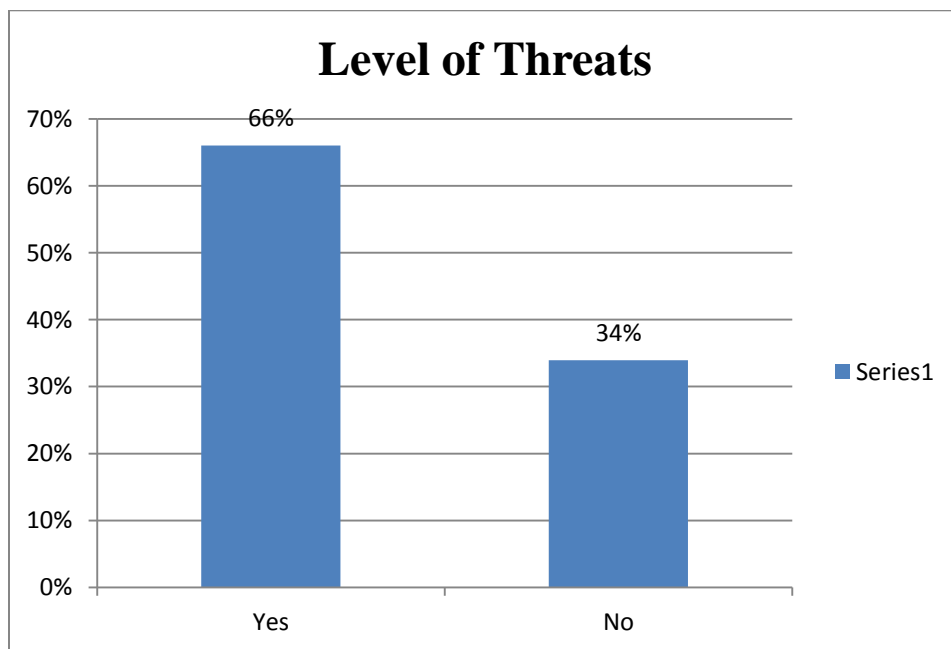
4.2.15 Right to Information

72% of the journalists who took the survey said that there were difficult to access information. While 28% says they had no problem in accessing information.



4.2.16 Threat to media in the future

Among the journalists who took the survey 66% believes that threat level will increase in the future. While 34% of the journalists who took part in the survey believes that threat level will not increase.



5. Challenges in Conducting the Research

The biggest obstacle faced in carrying forward this research was that the research team did not receive the full cooperation hoped for from some broadcast stations. As a result of this the team was not able to interview all the broadcast stations as initially planned. In addition some of the staff in the broadcast stations worked in shift duty while others worked outside of the station and as a result, some of them were unable to participate in the survey. The research team also sent written request for information from authorities of relevance to media; however there was no response from these authorities.

6. Conclusion

While freedom of expression and media freedom is enshrined in the constitution in article 27 and 28, journalists continue to face threats in various forms on a daily basis. In addition to the threats indicative of bodily harm and threat to life and family, there is the very real threat to property of broadcast stations, the research results also conclude that there are a number of challenges to media freedom in the Maldives in the form of difficulty to access information, intimidation, discrimination among journalists and different channels and political instability.

Through the study, Maldives Broadcasting Commission also found that in order to make the report broader and more comprehensive, it was vital to seek additional information from related industries that are linked to the media sector. Hence the Commission has decided to carry out additional study as second phase of this research.

7. Recommendations

In order to have a free and independent media, the following needs to be met.

1. All journalists should be treated equally without any discrimination.
2. Remove all barriers to media freedom and stop the harassment of journalists and discourage any activity that could lead to the harassment of journalists.
3. Accept journalists as protectors of democracy and enable the right to information and facilitate media to carry out their duty.
4. All broadcast content should follow the broadcast Code of Practice and guidelines.
5. Refrain from promoting one political party or political ideology.
6. Refuse to accept any attacks on journalists.
7. Government and state organizations should give equal opportunity to all media without any discrimination.
8. In the wake of a threat or imminent threat, police should provide timely protection to journalists and property of media stations.
9. The investigation and adjudication of attacks to media should be carried out in a fast track manner.
10. Journalists should be trained to maintain ethical and professional standards to foster and sustain freedom of media.

8. Appendix

----- Report Issued on April 2014 -----

STUDY TEAM

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TRANSLATION for internal use – based on the Dhivehi text of the report issued.

1. *Aishath Shaaheen* ---- *Director*
2. *Mohamed Sofwan* --- *International Relations officer*