

Expression Pulse

Journalists' Digital Freedom Monitor

Round 1 | Bangladesh | August 2026

Are journalists holding back from expressing themselves online?

SCOPE	Journalists' experiences of digital expression over the past six months
PARTICIPANTS	22 journalists
PERIOD	10-25 August 2026
FOCUS	Signals of risk, fear of repercussions and changes in expression

What this Pulse examines

Social media is not only a place for journalists to distribute news. They share information and reports they consider important, and express their views on issues of public interest. How freely journalists can speak online is therefore an important question for freedom of expression and the wider digital public sphere.

Can fear of possible negative consequences or repercussions limit journalists' expression on social media? A journalist may not have been directly targeted, yet may decide not to publish a post after seeing another journalist attacked. Some may stop commenting on political or social issues, while others may narrow the range of issues they discuss publicly. Expression Pulse regularly tracks signals of these less visible changes.

At a glance

Indicator	Round 1
Refrained from expressing views because of fear of possible consequences	18/22
Often refrained from expressing views	13/22
Feel less comfortable expressing views than six months ago	15/22
Now avoid publicly discussing some issues	19/22*
Changed their own expression after seeing consequences faced by another journalist	21/22*
Impact on both personal expression and professional journalism	13/22

* Three participants did not answer the question about avoiding topics, and one did not answer the question about the impact of other journalists' experiences.

Findings

What happens to one journalist can change what others say

The most notable signal in Round 1 concerns the effect of other journalists' experiences. Twenty-one participants answered the question of whether seeing another journalist face attack, harassment, threats or other negative consequences for online expression affects their own expression.

All 21 said it has an effect. Twelve said the effect is significant, while nine said it has some effect. This suggests that the impact of an attack or harassment may extend beyond the journalist directly affected. Other journalists are assessing their own risks in light of such incidents and changing their decisions about expression accordingly.

18 refrained from expressing their views

During the past six months, when asked whether they had refrained from expressing their views on social media about an event or issue of public interest because of fear of possible consequences, 18 of 22 participants said "yes". Of them, 13 said they had done so often.

This restraint takes different forms. Participants described writing posts but not publishing them, avoiding comments on certain issues, not sharing other people's posts or reports, reducing public posts, and avoiding discussion of particular issues, people or institutions.

A journalist may therefore remain active online while narrowing the range of issues they are willing to discuss because of fear of negative repercussions.

Some issues are becoming harder to discuss

Nineteen participating journalists said they currently avoid discussing some issues publicly online because of possible consequences. Three did not answer this question.

Topics they said they avoid include politics, political parties and individuals, criticism of the government, religion, communal issues, law and order, the economy, rape, foreign policy and various institutions.

The sample is too small to determine which issues are avoided most frequently. However, issues related to power, politics and the public interest are clearly present in the responses.

Less comfortable than six months ago

Fifteen of 22 participants said they now feel less comfortable expressing views on social media about events in Bangladesh or issues of public interest than they did six months ago.

Change in comfort	Number
Much less	9
Somewhat less	6
About the same	3
Somewhat more	3
No answer	1

This is not a measure of Bangladesh's overall freedom-of-expression environment. Among the journalists participating in Round 1, however, the main direction of change is toward lower levels of comfort.

The concerns extend beyond the online space

Journalists' concerns are not limited to trolling, hacking or account security. Their responses also mentioned coordinated online harassment, threats, exposure of personal information, reputational harm, professional consequences, workplace pressure, political repercussions, legal complications, physical safety and the safety of family members.

In other words, journalists do not assume that the possible consequences of online expression will remain online. Concern that what is said online can have offline consequences is influencing their decisions about expression.

Impact beyond personal expression

Thirteen participating journalists said concern about negative consequences has affected both their personal expression on social media and their professional life as journalists. Seven said the impact was limited to personal expression.

This does not mean that 13 journalists are withholding information from news reports or not publishing stories. Expression Pulse did not examine this.

The findings do suggest, however, that the risks associated with personal digital expression and journalists' professional experiences are not always entirely separate.

About Expression Pulse

Expression Pulse is an initiative that regularly tracks signals of change in journalists' freedom of expression, sense of safety and participation in Bangladesh's digital public sphere.

Round 1 collected anonymous responses from 22 journalists between 10 and 25 August 2026. They were asked about their experiences over the previous six months. Eighteen participants were men, three were women and one preferred not to state their gender.

PARTICIPANTS	22 journalists
PERIOD	10–25 August 2026
EXPERIENCE PERIOD	Previous six months
SELECTION	Non-random

Limitations

This is not a nationally representative survey. Twenty-two journalists participated in this Pulse and they were not selected randomly. The results therefore do not represent all journalists in Bangladesh.

Expression Pulse is not intended to describe the overall situation of journalists in Bangladesh in relation to expression in digital spaces. Its purpose is to identify, every six months, signals of change in journalists' experiences of expressing themselves.