



Monitoring of PTV Shows Pro-Musharraf Bias

Human Rights Watch monitored television election coverage in three phases prior to elections: December 19-26, 2007; January 7-14, 2008; and February 7-10, 2008. During the monitoring periods, Human Rights Watch documented election-related content in the main news bulletins of the three most popular 24-hour Urdu-language news channels, Aaj TV, ARY One World, and Geo News (on the internet until it was restored on air), as well as the state-owned Pakistan Television (PTV) news. Periodically, monitors noted details of news bulletins on other cable channels like Dawn News (English), Business Plus, and Indus News. The bulletins were not recorded.

Human Rights Watch documented the start time of each news story and noted statements of officials and political leaders. The documentation focused on details of elections and campaign news, noted whether the coverage included a video or audio clip of a leader, noted party affiliation, and noted whether the news was provided with a voiceover comment. The monitoring included observations of any unusual news or change in programming. Advertisement and promotional breaks were also noted along with the name of the party sponsoring campaign advertisements.

Human Rights Watch has on several occasions noted President Pervez Musharraf's attempts to control and censor independent news channels. With only 30 out of every 1,000 Pakistanis estimated to read the newspapers, the electronic media plays a particularly critical role in the pre-electoral and electoral process. In an election period, state television has a particularly great responsibility to act impartially and provide fair coverage and access to all political parties.

However, Human Rights Watch's research shows that PTV has shown a clear bias in favor of the president and the political parties that support him, and against the opposition. During the pre-election period, PTV gave Musharraf-backed Pakistan Muslim League-Q and its allies broadcast time far in excess of its coverage of the opposition. In addition, PTV completely ignored the parties advocating a boycott of elections. Privately-owned channels, however, do report on the activities of these political parties, which have participated in previous elections.

PTV gave the opposition parties¹ relatively more balanced coverage in December, but after Benazir Bhutto's assassination, air time for the PML-Q and its allies² jumped up to

¹ Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), and Jamiat-e-UlemaIslam-(Fazlur Rehman) (JUI-F). For the purposes of this monitoring exercise, Human Rights Watch counted JUI-F as an opposition party, which it is technically is, although it has often provided Musharraf support. JUI-F was part of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) alliance of Islamist parties that governed Pakistan's North West Frontier Province from 2002 to 2007, and is the only constituent of the MMA participating in elections

77 percent of airtime in the period covered in January. The trend continued with 58 percent of air time for the PML-Q and its allied parties in the period covered in February (see charts: Heavy Bias in PTV's Coverage of Pro-Musharraf Parties).

In the periods monitored, PTV gave the ruling coalition 48 percent of coverage in its primetime news bulletins in December, 77 percent in January and 58 percent in February, compared to the opposition's 52 percent, 23 percent and 42 percent during the same periods (see charts: Heavy Bias in PTV's Coverage of Pro-Musharraf Parties). Considerable time was also given to the caretaker government appointed by Musharraf.

In addition, with elections just ahead, many news items covered inaugurations of projects that could be linked to the outgoing government. (See charts: Bias in Pro-Musharraf vs. Opposition News Coverage).

1. Percentages of time allocated in PTV's news bulletin to Musharraf-backed and opposition parties

During the monitoring period, PTV news broadcasts gave the following time allocations for individual political parties, expressed in percentage of total air time:

PTV coverage of pro-Musharraf parties

	December 19-26, 2007	January 0-14, 2008	February 7-10, 2008
PML-Q	28	70	46
MQM	4	2	10
PPP-S	12	5	2
PML-F	4	0	0
Total	48	77	58

while the rest have announced a boycott of the polls. Since PTV is not reporting on any of the "boycott parties," the MMA's share of coverage in the state-controlled television channels' news bulletin was zero in the periods monitored.

² Pakistan Muslim League-(Quaid-e-Azam) (PML-Q), Mutaheda Qaumi Movement (MQM), Pakistan Peoples Party (Sherpao) (PPP-Sherpao), and Pakistan Muslim League-(Functional) (PML-F).

PTV coverage of opposition parties

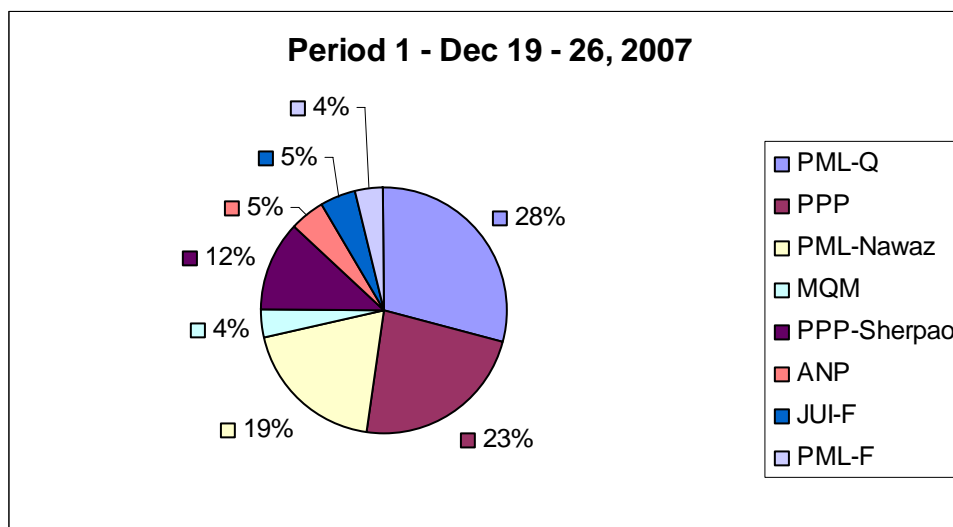
	December 19-26, 2007	January 7-14, 2008	February 7-10, 2008
PPP	23	12	22
PML-N	19	6	15
ANP	5	5	2
JUI-F	5	0	3
Total	52	23	42

2. Heavy Bias in PTV's Coverage of Pro-Musharraf Parties

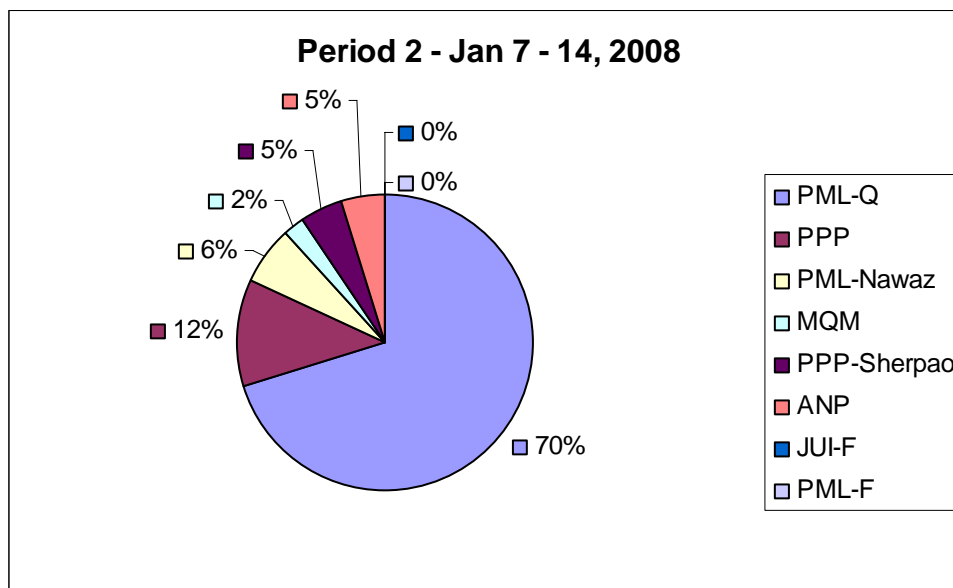
Human Rights Watch monitored PTV's coverage of the pro-Musharraf political parties without including the caretaker government. The government claims the caretaker government is neutral; the opposition claims it is biased.

The following charts show the percentage of election coverage time PTV gave individual parties in each time period followed with a sum-total analysis of coverage. The state-owned television channel gave a consistently higher percentage of time to parties supporting Musharraf. There is a notable spike in the coverage of PML-Q after the assassination of Bhutto, when it appears that PTV carried out an image-building exercise for the party.

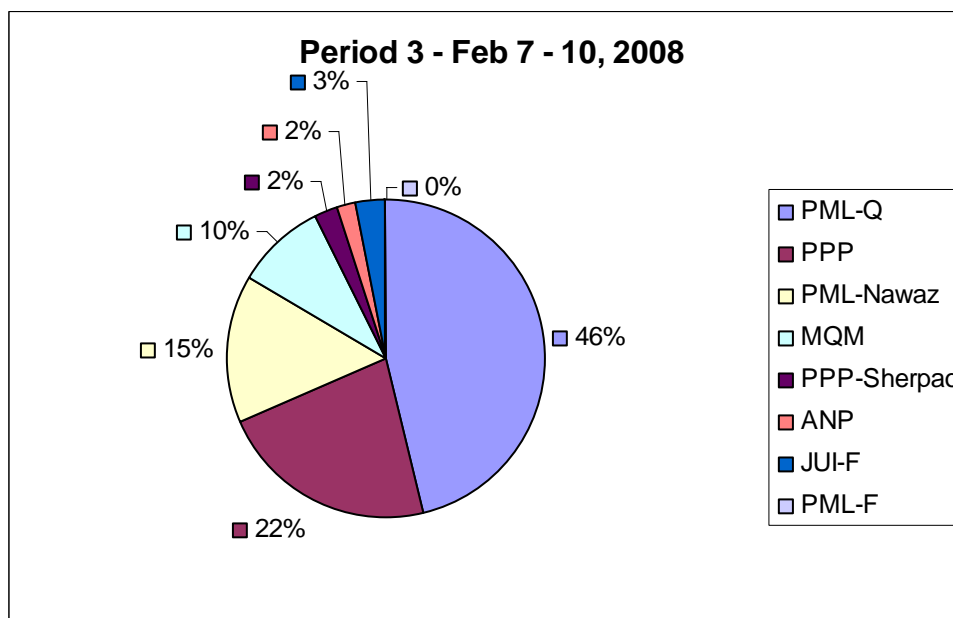
Period 1 (December 19-26, 2007)



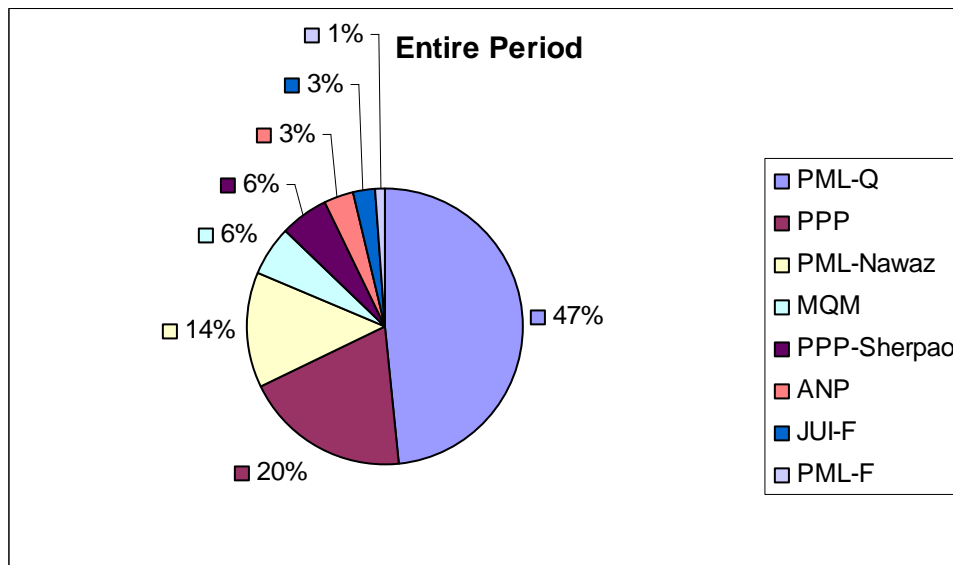
Period 2 (January 7-14, 2008)



Period 3 (February 7-10, 2008)



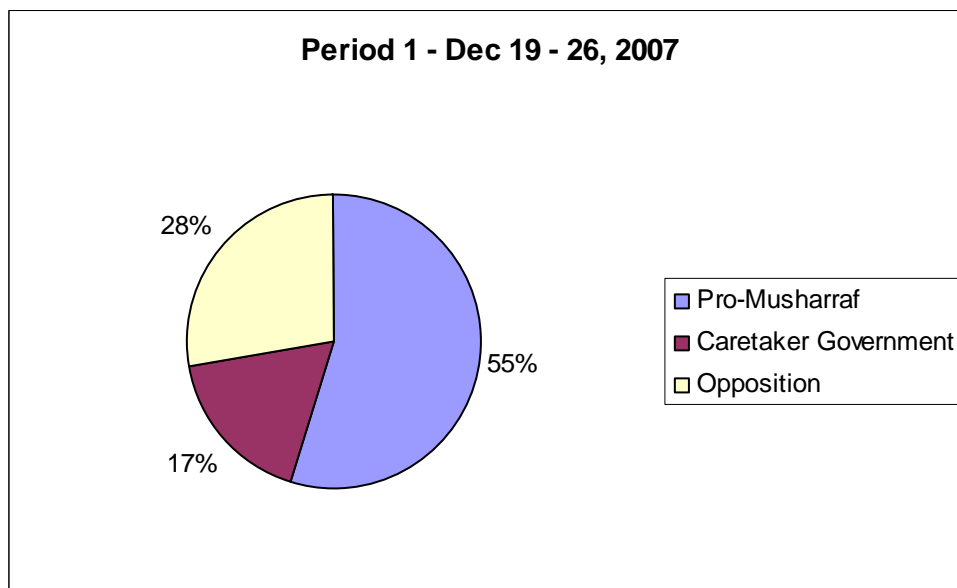
Total (Periods 1 + 2 + 3)



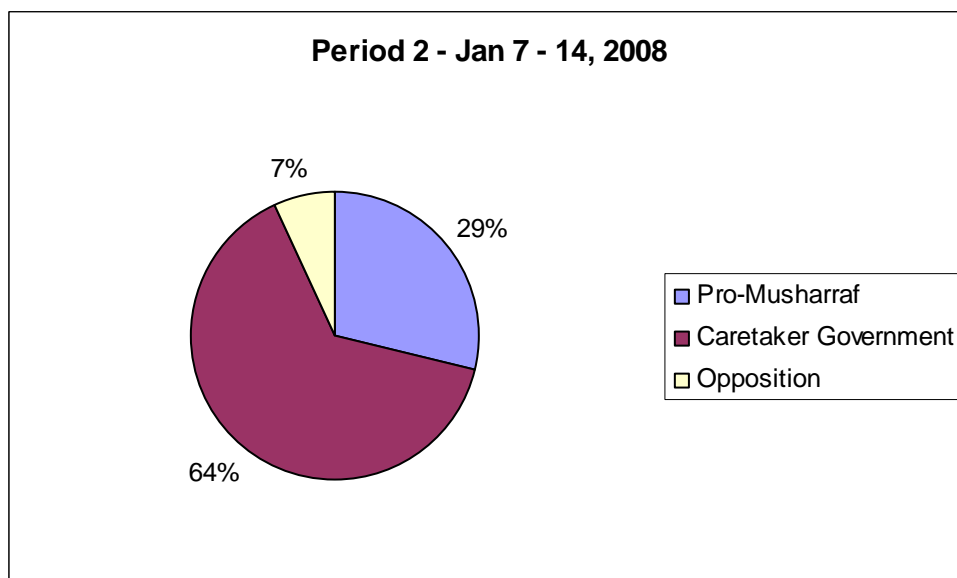
3. Bias in Pro-Musharraf vs. Opposition News Coverage

These charts show the percentage of time PTV gave to news of pro-Musharraf political parties and Musharraf himself compared with time given to opposition political parties. The pro-Musharraf parties include Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Pakistan People's PartySherpao (PPP-S), and Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F). The opposition parties include Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), and Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI-F).

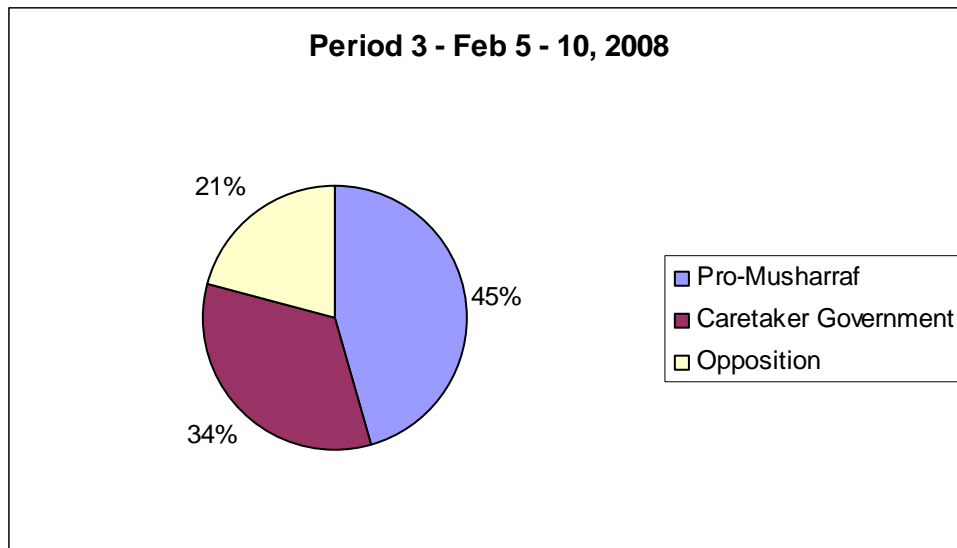
Period 1 (December 19-26, 2007)



Period 2 (January 7-14, 2008)



Period 3 (February 7-10, 2008)



Total (Periods 1 + 2 + 3)

