

# Challenging comedy in Pakistan

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2007-8-9

**In the latest of our guest blogs by POLIS Summer School students *Dawood Mian* finds surprising programmes on Pakistani TV that are tackling sensitive issues in startling new ways.**



Although Pakistan, these days, seems to make the news daily there is not much discussion regarding the media landscape which exists there. Contrary to popular belief it was initially under President Pervaiz Musharraf's rule that [media laws were liberalized](#) and new private T.V. and radio stations were allowed to broadcast, ending the broadcasting monopoly of state run PTV. One channel which has gained a large following is [GEO TV](#), an independent television station that [uplinks via satellite from Dubai](#) and is broadcast all over the world.

While there may be many reasons why GEO has gained popularity amongst Pakistani audiences I believe its news based program lineup has been a major reason why it continues to be watched by so many. Programs, such as [Aaj Kamran Khan Kay Sath](#) (*Today with Kamran Khan*) a live political discussion show broadcast from Islamabad and [Aalim Online](#) a show in which religious leaders (both Sunni and Shi'a) answer calls from viewers discussing religious subjects, such as Islamic rules regarding rape (largely considered a taboo topic to discuss in Pakistan) is undoubtedly not only challenging Pakistan's political/social norms but aiding in the development of healthy media standards.

However, arguably the most bold move GEO has undertaken yet is with its comedy program [Hum Sab Umeed Say Hain](#) a satirical comedy show which, unlike shows in the past, boldly satires both former and current political leaders, including Musharraf himself. However, as with many media outlets in politically unstable regions that have attempted to criticize dictatorial government or discuss extremely controversial topics GEO has recently faced a [backlash](#) by PEMRA the media regulatory association in Pakistan which has on a number of occasions stopped GEO broadcasts in Pakistan. Although Musharraf like tactics for trying to curb media criticism of his government has in the past stopped media from freely expressing their opinions in Pakistan, GEO has remained true to its programming and continues to satire, debate and discuss.

By Dawood Mian, POLIS Summer School, 2007

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