

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS REUNITE WITH FAMILIES; ONE STILL MISSING
Human rights activists Salman Haider, Waqas Goraya, Asim Saeed, and Ahmed Raza Naseer returned home between 27 – 29th January after being subjected to a suspected enforced disappearance in early January by security forces in Pakistan. Another activist, Samar Abbas, is still missing; his fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

Four activists who had gone missing in Pakistan at the beginning of January, in a suspected enforced disappearance by security forces, returned home between 27th and 29th January. Academic and poet, **Salman Haider**, and bloggers **Asim Saeed**, **Ahmed Raza Naseer** and **Waqas Goraya** were reported safe after reuniting with their families after over 3 weeks of being missing. Asim Saeed, a Singapore based blogger and IT expert who was abducted while visiting Lahore, has since left the country, in fear for his life. The families of the activists have since received death threats allegedly from banned armed group Laskar-e-Jhangvi. A fifth activist- Karachi based **Samar Abbas**, who headed the Civil Progressive Alliance Pakistan, had also gone missing from Islamabad on 7 January where he had travelled to for work. His whereabouts still remain unknown.

All five activists used online platforms, such as Facebook, to disseminate their views on human rights issues in Pakistan. They all, in particular, criticised religious militancy and Pakistan's military establishment.

Since their disappearance, sections of the Pakistani media and the internet have accused the activists of "anti-state" activities, linking them with an allegedly blasphemous page on Facebook called 'Bhensa', and in some cases, instigating violence against them. This is extremely worrying given that a simple accusation of blasphemy can lead to death threats and often mob violence in Pakistan. Amnesty International's recent report 'As Good as Dead: The Misuse of the Blasphemy laws in Pakistan' details a number of cases that illustrate the potentially fatal consequences of a blasphemy allegation.

Please write immediately in Urdu or English:

- Expressing concern that Samar Abbas may have been subjected to enforced disappearance and urging the Pakistani authorities to immediately disclose his fate and whereabouts if he is in their custody;
- Calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of the activists and that of their families', in light of the threats they have received, and urging them to conduct an independent and transparent investigation into their abduction, and hold all those suspected of criminal responsibility to account in trials before ordinary civilian courts that meet international standards and without recourse to the death penalty;
- Urging the government to take immediate action to investigate all those who have incited violence against the five activists and other human rights defenders and journalists.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 MARCH 2017 TO:

President of Pakistan
 Honourable Mr Mamnoon Hussain
 President's Secretariat
 Islamabad, Pakistan
 Fax: +92 51 920 8479
Salutation: Your Excellency

Prime Minister of Pakistan
 Muhammad Nawaz Sharif
 Prime Minister's House
 Secretariat, Constitution Avenue
 Islamabad, Pakistan
 Fax: +92 51 922 0404 (PM Secretariat)
 Twitter: @pmln_org
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Federal Minister for Interior
 Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan
 Room 404, 4th Floor, R Block
 Pakistan Secretariat
 Islamabad, Pakistan
 Fax: +92 51 920 2624
 E-mail: interior.complaintcell@gmail.com
Salutation: Dear Interior Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 5/17. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/5449/2017/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Cases of arbitrary detention, harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, journalists, and political activists have been regularly reported in various parts of Pakistan, including Balochistan, in the southwest, and most recently, Karachi, in the southeast of Pakistan, where The Rangers have been given extensive powers by virtue of the Anti-Terrorism Act to use force, conduct raids and arrest suspects for the prevention of 'terrorism'. However, these five activists going missing- two from the capital and the others from other cities in the Punjab province- is a new, and extremely disturbing development as it signifies a crackdown against online dissent against state policies and the voicing of opinions relating to human rights.

Wahid Baloch, human rights defender and Baloch activist was subjected to a suspected enforced disappearance by state security forces from the outskirts of Karachi on 26 July 2016. He was reunited with his family more than four months later. His family has said that he was dropped in Malir, 30km east of Karachi, on the morning of 5 December 2016, and then took a taxi to his home in Lyari, in the Sindh province in southeast Pakistan. Wahid Baloch chose not to speak about his abduction during a news broadcast in December 2016, but he thanked rights groups for campaigning on his behalf. Prior to this, human rights defender Saeed Baloch was arrested in Karachi on 16 January 2016 by members of The Rangers, Pakistan's paramilitary police force. Following national and international pressure, he was presented in court on 26 January 2016. The Rangers claimed he had only been arrested on 25 January 2016. He was placed under a preventative detention order for three months under the Anti-Terrorism Act, and eventually released on bail on 3 August 2016.

Under international law, the right to life and freedom from torture and other ill-treatment are non-derogable, and apply in all circumstances. Pakistan is obliged to respect and protect these rights under several human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In addition, the prohibition of enforced disappearance is a rule of customary international law binding on all states and a crime under international law. Under Article 2 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, each state has a duty to create the conditions necessary to defend human rights within their jurisdictions. However, human rights defenders in Pakistan continue to be arrested, detained, tortured and imprisoned simply for their involvement in peaceful activities. Human rights defenders in Pakistan also face intimidation and harassment. Amnesty International calls on the government of Pakistan to ensure an environment exists in which it is possible to defend human rights, as well as peacefully express political opinions without fear of reprisal or intimidation.

Name: Salman Haider, Waqas Goraya, Asim Saeed, Ahmed Raza Naseer, Samar Abbas
Gender m/f: all m

Further information on UA: 5/17 Index: ASA 33/5603/2017 Issue Date: 3 February 2017