

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 33/019/2004

UA 253/04

Fear for Safety / "Disappearance"

23 August 2004

PAKISTAN

Akdas A. M. Iqbal (m), student – British National
Sujeel Shahid (m), student – Dutch National

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of British national Akdas Iqbal and Dutch national Sujeel Shahid. They "disappeared" on 14 June, having been detained by an unidentified state agency. Both are students at Lahore University and may have been held as part of a wave of arrests of foreign and Pakistani nationals suspected of being linked with *al-Qa'ida*.

Akdas Iqbal is a full time dental student and has a valid Pakistani visa. He was born in the United Kingdom (UK) and his family has been in contact with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in London in an attempt to establish his whereabouts. The FCO has informed them that it contacted the Pakistani Interior Ministry some six weeks ago but is still waiting for a response.

The family has filed a *habeas corpus* petition in the High Court in Lahore in order to establish Akdas Iqbal's whereabouts. A senior officer from the Wahadat Road Police station informed the court that he was not aware that the students had been arrested or picked up by his or any other Pakistani authority. The High Court ordered him to contact all Pakistani authorities and establish their whereabouts by 30 July.

On the 30 July, the Wahadat Road Police Station informed the court that their representative was sick and would not be attending the hearing. At the next hearing on 9 August, the Deputy General of Police and the Senior Superintendent of Police attended the High Court, but again failed to provide any information on the whereabouts of Akdas Iqbal and Sujeel Shahid. On this occasion the Dutch Consulate representative was also present.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Along with a search operation that is ongoing in the tribal areas of Pakistan, the Government has been conducting widespread arrests of suspected *al-Qa'ida* and Taleban members across the country. These include both foreign and Pakistani nationals. As many as a dozen suspects are arrested each week and held without charge or trial in secret detention. They are not brought before a magistrate and are in danger of being tortured and possibly extradited to other countries where they may be at risk of human rights violations.

Amnesty International has deep concerns regarding the possible torture of these detainees and their extradition to other countries. Recent reports have shown that the Government has been sweeping universities and institutes of learning under the pretext that foreign militants may be operating from there. Pakistan has violated a range of human rights obligations which are guaranteed in the Constitution of Pakistan, Pakistan law and International Law. These include the right to life, to security of the person, to fair trial and to freedom from torture or ill-treatment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of British national Akdas Iqbal and Dutch national Sujeel Shahid who “disappeared” on 14 June 2004 after being detained by a state agency;
- calling on the authorities to promptly establish their whereabouts, and identify who is holding them;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee their safety and insure that they are not subjected to torture or ill treatment;
- calling for Akdas Iqbal and Sujeel Shahid to be immediately and unconditionally released unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling for both men to be treated in strict accordance with the law if there are criminal charges against them; this includes being brought before a magistrate and allowed prompt and regular contact with a lawyer of their choice and with their families.

APPEALS TO:

Chaudary Pervez Elahi
Chief Minister Punjab
30-C Ch. Zahur Elahi Road
Gulberg-II
Lahore
Pakistan

Fax: +92 42 920 3224
Email: home@punjab.gov.pk
Salutation: Dear Minister

Lieutenant General (Retired) Khalid Maqbool
Governor Punjab
Governor House
Lahore
Pakistan

Fax: +92 42 920 3044
Email: governor.sectt@punjab.gov.pk
Salutation: Dear Governor

Prime Minister
Pak Secretariat
Islamabad
Pakistan

Fax: +92 51 9204632
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Pakistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 October 2004.