

URGENT ACTION

ABDUCTED PAKISTANI JOURNALIST IN DANGER

Pakistani journalist Rehmatullah Darpakhel was abducted a month ago by unknown armed men in insurgency-hit North Waziristan in northwestern Pakistan. There has been no news about his fate and whereabouts since. Amnesty International fears that he may be at grave risk of torture and death.

Over a month has passed since the afternoon of August 11, when journalist **Rehmatullah Darpakhel** was abducted by unknown men as he shopped for groceries in his home town of Miran Shah in North Waziristan. Despite repeated promises to investigate since then, Pakistan authorities have failed to adequately investigate Darpakhel's abduction. Concerns for his welfare remain as urgent today as the moment he was taken.

An experienced journalist with a reputation for fair and balanced coverage, Rehmatullah Darpakhel was one of the few to report from North Waziristan tribal agency, one of the most active and dangerous frontlines in the ongoing conflict between the Taliban and international forces.

No one has claimed responsibility for Rehmatullah Darpakhel's abduction and his family and friends do not know where he is. But it is feared he may have been abducted by Pakistan security forces or local Taliban who have been implicated in abductions and extra-judicial executions during military operations in the country's north-west.

Journalists from the Tribal Union of Journalists, of which Rehmatullah Darpakhel was Vice President, say they are scared for their future and feel helpless because they cannot protest the kidnap of their colleague out of fear of reprisal from the military and the Taliban.

Amnesty International calls upon Pakistan authorities to ensure a prompt and thorough investigation into the circumstances around the abduction of Rehmatullah Darpakhel, as well as the killing and abuse of other journalists. Those responsible must be brought to justice in fair trials that are consistent with internationally recognised standards of human rights. At a time when ordinary Pakistanis are increasingly concerned with the law and order situation in their country, Pakistan's political parties and authorities must send the message that perpetrators of human rights violations are not above the law.

Please write immediately in English or Urdu or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Rehmatullah Darpakhel has not been seen or heard from since 11 August;
- Urging the authorities to conduct an immediate, prompt and impartial investigation into the whereabouts of Rehmatullah Darpakhel and if he is found in state detention to immediately inform his relatives, ensuring that anyone involved in his disappearance, including at the highest levels of command, is promptly brought to justice and Mr Darpakhel is granted reparations;
- Calling on the authorities to take all possible steps to ensure that Rehmatullah Darpakhel is not subjected to torture or ill-treatment and allowed access to lawyers of his choice and any medical treatment he may require; and
- Expressing your concerns about the growing attacks on journalists and media workers in Pakistan.

PLEASE FAX OR POST APPEALS BEFORE 25 OCTOBER 2011 TO:

President of Pakistan

Mr Asif Ali Zardari
Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad
Pakistan

Fax: +92 51 920 4974

Salutation: Dear President

Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Mr Syed Masood Kausar
Governor House, Peshawar, Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Fax: +92 91 9210899

Salutation: Dear Governor

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As Pakistan's security situation worsens and the government comes under pressure to deal with growing insurgency and terrorist activities, journalists in Pakistan, especially those working in the conflict-affected areas, have come under increasing threats and attacks by both state and non-state actors for reporting on human rights violations. Journalists faced a range of threats from state authorities and armed groups including intimidation, abduction, torture in detention and targeted killing across Pakistan and particularly in the north-west, Balochistan and Karachi.

August alone saw a number of attacks on media some of which implicated law enforcement authorities.

- On 6 August police reportedly searched the headquarters of the Urdu-language daily Mashriq claiming they were searching for a criminal. Following protests by journalists, the local police chief suspended the officers responsible for the raid.
- On 14 August, journalist Muneer Shakir was shot dead by two armed men on a motorcycle in Khuzdar, Balochistan. The incident occurred soon after he covered a protest organized by a Baloch separatist organization. No one claimed responsibility for the incident, but Baloch separatist organizations have reportedly barred journalists from reporting on their activities.
- A Samaa TV bureau chief and two other media workers were reportedly detained and beaten by police in the Peshawar suburb of Hayatabad on 19 August after going to a Hayatabad hospital where victims of a suicide bombing had been taken for treatment. The journalists were released after several hours, following demonstrations by fellow journalists and journalist unions.
- A crew of three media workers from Pashto language Khyber News TV was ambushed at midday in the centre of Peshawar on 22 August. As police allegedly stood by watching, men on two motorcycles and a car blocked the TV crew's route and the men fired shots and hit one of the journalists with stones, causing a serious head injury. The policemen allegedly refused to assist the injured journalist. The attack was thought to have been in response to a report by the news channel on alleged corruption in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists most killings of journalists have been carried out with impunity and 17 cases of journalist murders remain unsolved since 2001.

Senior journalist Saleem Shahzad was abducted by unknown perpetrators on 29 May in Islamabad and his body was found 2 days later close to his abandoned car in the north-west of the country showing signs of torture. In October last year, Shahzad claimed to have received death threats from the Army's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) over his investigations into alleged al-Qa'ida penetration of Pakistan's military. In a short note following the alleged threat, Shahzad said he would hold the ISI responsible if he were to be subsequently killed. A public inquiry has been established to investigate Saleem Shahzad's abduction and murder but there are grave concerns that it will not adequately investigate Pakistan's intelligence agencies.

Name: Rehmatullah Darpakhel

Gender m/f: male

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