

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 33/14/97

UA 125/97

Torture / Fear for safety

30 April 1997

**PAKISTAN (AFGHANISTAN) Khalil  
Members of the Revolutionary Association of Women of  
Afghanistan (RAWA)**

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Concern for the safety of members of the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) in Pakistan has been heightened following the detention and torture of a RAWA sympathizer by individuals reportedly linked to Pakistan's security forces.

Following a peaceful RAWA demonstration in Islamabad on 28 April 1997, reportedly attended by some 400 Afghan women protesting against Taleban policies in Afghanistan (see below), members of the Pakistan police stopped a car in which five RAWA sympathizers - three boys aged between 12 and 14 and two young men - were travelling. The police arrested the children and one of the adults and took them to the I9 Police station in Islamabad. The other man, Khalil, was detained by two men in plain clothes waiting in a car parked nearby. The two individuals reportedly told the police that they were taking Khalil for investigation and instructed the police to keep the four detainees until they had finished their interrogation.

The two men blindfolded Khalil, tied his hands, and took him away to an unknown location where they beat him severely. They warned him that if RAWA members did not stop criticizing the Taleban, they could expect severe punishment. One of the interrogators reportedly said: "You [RAWA] were free to criticize corrupt Mujahideen groups but we will not allow you to criticize the Taleban". They warned that RAWA members should stop their demonstrations against the Taleban. The interrogators continued to beat Khalil and demanded that he tell them the whereabouts, addresses and telephone numbers of RAWA leaders. After about four hours of continuous beating, they dumped him in a wood near Islamabad. He was helped by some local people and given medical treatment.

The other four prisoners were released by the police after they had endured intense interrogation at the I9 police station in Islamabad. The police reportedly sought addresses and phone numbers of RAWA leaders.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

RAWA, a left-of-centre group which does not advocate violence, has been active for over a decade. It campaigns for women's rights and provides education and health facilities for women and children. It has set up a number of educational and health programs in Afghanistan but has had to scale down these operations because of the threats it receives. Most of its operations are based in Afghan refugee areas in Pakistan. These include several well-organized schools in Peshawar and Quetta and a health centre in Quetta.

RAWA has been at the forefront of Afghan groups campaigning for women's rights in Afghanistan. It has continuously opposed the policies of the Afghan Mujahideen groups towards women and, since the advent of the Taleban in southern Afghanistan in 1994, RAWA members have been demonstrating against the Taleban's ban on women going to work and girls going to school. RAWA's demonstrations are attended by Afghan women only, but many Afghan men who support RAWA's cause usually stay in the background and provide security when necessary.

Even in Pakistan, RAWA's leaders continue to receive death threats from the Afghan warring factions, and several have had to go into hiding in fear for their lives. In February 1987, Mina Keshwar Kamal, a health worker and founding member of RAWA, was assassinated along with two other members of her family in her house in Quetta. The circumstances of the killing and testimonies received by Amnesty International from independent sources and witnesses strongly indicate that the assassins may have been closely linked to one of the Afghan Mujahideen factions, *Hezb-e Islami*. Prior to her assassination, Mina Keshwar Kamal had received repeated death threats for her "anti-jihad [holy war]" activities. Although she informed the Pakistan authorities of the threats, she reportedly received no protection from the police.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- expressing deep concern about the reported detention and torture of Khalil by Pakistani security personnel on account of his sympathy for the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan;
- expressing concern for the safety of RAWA members in Pakistan following this incident;
- urging the Pakistan authorities to bring to justice those responsible for the torture and ill-treatment of Khalil;
- urging the Government of Pakistan to issue clear warnings that it will not tolerate any harassment or intimidation of RAWA members in Pakistan.

**APPEALS TO:**

President Farooq Leghari  
Office of the President  
Islamabad  
Pakistan

**Telegrams: President, Islamabad, Pakistan**  
**Fax: + 92 51 921 1018**  
**Salutation: Dear President**

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Islamabad  
Pakistan

**Telegrams: Prime Minister, Islamabad, Pakistan**  
**Fax: + 92 51 920 1545; 920 8890**  
**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 20 June 1997.