

URGENT ACTION

MINORITY RIGHTS JOURNALIST ATTACKED AND INJURED

Pakistani minority rights journalist Rana Tanweer faced an assassination attempt on 9 June. He was attacked in a hit and run accident and fractured his leg. Days before, his home was vandalised and he was threatened for his writing. The authorities have not provided him and his family with adequate protection nor held the perpetrators to account.

Rana Tanweer, a reporter for Pakistan's Express Tribune who reports mainly on minority rights issues, including discrimination against the Ahmaddiya community and blasphemy laws, is at risk. On the afternoon of 9 June, he faced a failed assassination attempt when a car tried to run him over in Lahore, the capital of Punjab, Pakistan's largest province. He was thrown off his motorbike as the car rammed into him from behind. His leg was fractured in the accident.

At the end of May, Rana Tanweer's landlord received a phone call pressurising him to evict his tenant due to his alleged 'anti-Islam' stance. This was followed a few days later by a spray-painted message on the front door of his home reading "Qadiani supporter Rana Tanweer is an unbeliever who deserved to be killed". 'Qadiani' is a derogatory term used for Ahmadis, a minority Muslim community facing entrenched discrimination in Pakistan, both in law and in practice.

Rana Tanweer was threatened via emails and phone calls previously in 2013 as well, but no action was taken by the police.

Please write immediately in English or Urdu:

- Urging the Pakistani authorities to take immediate measures to end the continuing death threats, attacks and intimidation against Rana Tanweer and provide adequate protection to him and his family, in consultation with them and in accordance to their wishes;
- Calling on them to conduct thorough, impartial, independent and effective investigations into the assassination attempt, death threats and intimidation against Rana Tanweer and bring those suspected to be responsible to justice in trials which meet international standards of fairness and without recourse to the death penalty;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure a safe and enabling environment in which journalists, other media workers and human rights defenders are able to carry out their work without fear of reprisals.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 JULY 2017 TO:

President of Pakistan

Honorable Mr Mamnoon Hussain

President's Secretariat

Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: 011 92 51 920 8479

Twitter: @Mamnoon_hussain

Salutation: Your Excellency

Prime Minister of Pakistan

Muhammad Nawaz Sharif

Prime Minister House

Secretariat, Constitution Avenue

Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: 011 92 51 922 0404 (PM

Secretariat)

Twitter: @PMNawazSharif

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Chief Minister of Punjab

Chaudhry Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif

Chief Minister Secretariat

Lahore, Pakistan

Fax: 011 92 42 992 04915, 011 92 42

992 03224

Twitter: @CMShehbaz

Salutation: Dear Chief 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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pakistan continues to be a dangerous place for media workers and human rights defenders to work. Both, state and non-state actors have attempted to silence critical voices through threats, intimidation, abduction and killing. According to the International Federation of Journalists, five journalists were killed in Pakistan in 2016. On 8 May 2016, Khurram Zaki, a human rights defender and editor of the website “Let us Build Pakistan”, was gunned down in Karachi. Zaki had campaigned against Maulana Abdul Aziz, the Imam of the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad, known for his anti-Shia rhetoric and support for the armed group calling itself Islamic State (IS).

In an overwhelming majority of cases investigated by Amnesty International, the Pakistani authorities failed to carry out prompt, impartial, independent and thorough investigations into human rights abuses against journalists, or to bring those responsible to justice. In April 2014, Hamid Mir, host of *Capital Talk*, a popular TV show aired on the privately-owned Geo News channel, was shot and wounded in an attack in Karachi. Prior to the attack, Hamid Mir had reported on the military in critical terms, including its role in enforced disappearances in Balochistan. Mir and his colleagues accused high-ranking officials within the ISI (the Inter-Service Intelligence) of instigating the attack. When Geo TV aired these accusations, it was taken off air. The channel remained unavailable in parts of the country for weeks. Soon after the attack, the Prime Minister instituted a high-level judicial commission to “ascertain facts, identify culprits and fix responsibility for the incident”. Though the commission submitted its report on 18 December 2015, the government did not make it public. However, leaked copies of the report appeared on social media in April 2016. The commission was unable to reach a conclusion regarding the identity of the culprits or fixing responsibility for the incident on any individual, group or organization. However, the report did point out that “there was complete failure on the part of all the law enforcing agencies in the performance of their duty to properly investigate the instant case”. The report also endorsed the recommendations proposed by a Special Working Group of Pakistan Coalition on Media Safety (PCOMS) “to investigate attacks against media persons, namely, provision for appointment of a special prosecutor, legal aid unit, family counselling unit and primary case investigation unit are also worth consideration at the appropriate level”. The government has yet to implement the recommendations.

Pakistan’s Constitution, while guaranteeing the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press, subjects those freedoms to a range of vaguely-worded restrictions. These include offences which go beyond the permissible restrictions on freedom of expression under international human rights law, such as “reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam”, “the integrity, security or defence of Pakistan or any part thereof” and “friendly relations with foreign States”. This last example was used following media coverage of Pakistan’s response to the intervention of Saudi Arabia in Yemen in May 2015, and the stampede in September 2015 at the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca where more than 2,000 pilgrims died. The state-run Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) issued warnings to the media against airing reports deemed critical of Saudi Arabia. A similar notice was issued in January 2016 at a time of political tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. For each of these, PEMRA invoked Article 19 of the Constitution.

Five human rights defenders were forcibly disappeared in January 2017. Four of them were returned three weeks later, but the fate and whereabouts of one of them – Samar Abbas – remains unknown. Many bloggers and journalists have decided to self-censor for fear of being targeted too. Attempts by sections of the media and some religious groups to link human rights defenders with “blasphemous” online content represent a new and a particularly dangerous tool to counter political dissent.

Name: Rana Tanweer
Gender m/f: M

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