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## **Imminent risk of death for Afghan personalities in Pakistan**

Unless immediate action is taken to protect them, two prominent Afghan personalities living as refugees in Pakistan could be killed for their activities in support of peace and human rights in Afghanistan, Amnesty International said today.

"Fatana Gailani, head of the Afghan Women Council, and her husband, Ishaq Gailani, a prominent Afghan politician, have been living under continuous death threats in recent years, but in the light of recent attacks there are clear signs that their lives are at risk."

"The Pakistani authorities do not seem to have taken effective and adequate measures to protect them or to investigate past attacks -- including targeted killings," Amnesty International said.

Fatana and Ishaq Gailani's names have appeared in a hit list which began circulating in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan in mid-1998. So far at least four people named in that list have been assassinated and one has been seriously injured.

The political links of the killers are not clearly known, but all of those targeted are prominent Afghan personalities actively opposed to Taleban policies in Afghanistan, mostly from Pashtun ethnic background.

The Taleban movement has denied responsibility for these attacks. However, in some cases, individuals claiming to represent the Taleban have delivered the warnings in person, seeking an end to what they have termed as "anti-Taleban activity".

"The government of Pakistan should provide efficient and adequate protection to Fatana and Ishaq Gailani, and ensure that no Afghans in Pakistan become the target of death threats or assassination," Amnesty International urged. "These threats fit a pattern of harassment of refugee leaders over many years by Afghanistan's many warring factions."

The organization is also calling upon the Taleban to declare unequivocally that they are opposed to such assassinations and to make sure that Taleban members do not threaten the life or physical integrity of Afghan civilians.

### **Background**

Ishaq Gailani has confined himself to his house since last October when he noticed armed Afghan men continually following his car in Peshawar. His local guard, who was travelling with him, got out of the car to assess the situation and saw four armed men, all of whom were known to Ishaq Gailani. The armed men fled when they realized they had been detected. Since that incident, Ishaq Gailani has been unable to carry out his functions as the head of the Council for Understanding and Cooperation in Afghanistan, a gathering of Afghan intellectuals in Pakistan seeking a political solution to the armed conflict in Afghanistan. He resigned from his post two weeks ago.

Fatana Gailani also lives in constant fear. About two months ago, as she was leaving her office in Hyatabad area of Peshawar, her driver noticed three armed Afghan men in a car waiting at the corner of the street. They alerted the local police who arrested the men. However, they were released at the police station and no real investigation of the incident has been carried out.

An alarming number of attacks on Afghans have been taking place in Pakistan over the past few months. Pakistani authorities are reported not to have taken serious measures to investigate these attacks.

In January this year, there have been at least two politically motivated attacks against Afghans known for their opposition to the Taleban policies.

On 27 December, the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) postponed their scheduled demonstration against the Taleban policies towards women in Afghanistan. Pakistani newspaper, the Frontier Post reported:

*“A person identifying himself as a spokesman of Taleban called at the office of The Frontier Post in the afternoon, threatening that they would break the legs of RAWA participants if they took out a protest demonstration. He said that they had already informed the IGP (Inspector General of Police) about their decision and he would be responsible for any eventuality in case the RAWA took out a procession.*

*“He added that they did not allow the females to come out from their houses in Afghanistan, then how could they allow them to take to roads here in Pakistan. He added that the processions by the females was against the spirit of Islam.*

*When he was asked as to why they have been trying to implement the laws of Afghanistan in Pakistan, he replied that their laws are applicable to all the Afghans irrespective of their place of livings.” [sic]*

On 27 November, Ata Mohammad Sarkatib, known for his political opposition to the Taleban policies, was attacked by gunmen. He was seriously wounded when several armed men reportedly forced their way into his house. One person reportedly arrested in connection with this case has reportedly claimed he was hired by the Taleban. The Taleban authorities have denied any links.

General Shirin Agha, another leading member of Da Solh Ghorzan (peace movement party), was shot dead in Peshawar by two men on 25 November.

On 9 November Dagarwal Latif was killed in Quetta by gunmen on a motor bike. His killing appears to be connected to his support of a political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.

In early November Hashim Paktyanie, a prominent journalist advocating a representative parliamentary system of government in Afghanistan, was killed by gunmen as he left his house in Peshawar. He had been granted asylum in Sweden shortly before his death.

In July 1998, Nazar Mohammad, a prominent Afghan politician, was assassinated in Peshawar by two men who shot him dead in his shop with a pistol and fled on a motor bike.  
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