

UA 17/07 Incommunicado detention/ torture/ ill-treatment/ unfair trialPAKISTAN **Akhtar Mengal (m), leader of Balochistan National Party
15 members of the Balochistan National Party**

Akhtar Mengal, leader of the Balochistan National Party and former Chief Minister of the province of Balochistan, is reportedly being held incommunicado in solitary confinement in Karachi Central Prison, without access to the medical care he needs. Fifteen members of the Balochistan National Party arrested with him have "disappeared", and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Akhtar Mengal was arrested on November 28 2006 for charges relating to the expression of his political views. As well as denying him access to his lawyer and relatives, authorities at Karachi Central Prison have not allowed him to receive basic provisions such as bedding and food brought from home. Akhtar Mengal is reported to be suffering from a series of medical conditions including hepatitis, ulcers, high cholesterol and kidney pain, and has allegedly been denied access to medical care.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that the fifteen party members who were arrested with Akhtar Mengal are being held incommunicado and are at great risk of torture and ill-treatment. These party members are believed to be in the custody of Pakistan Military Intelligence.

Akhtar Mengal is currently on trial, in proceedings being held in Karachi Central Prison. Reports from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan raise concerns that his trial may be unfair. His family members have so far been barred from attending. Reports after his latest hearing, which took place on January 8 2007, reveal that Akhtar Mengal is forced to sit in an iron cage in the court room, preventing him from speaking to his lawyer. Iron cages are not used as a standard procedure in Pakistan and his party members feel it is being used as a means of humiliation.

Akhtar Mengal served as Chief Minister of Balochistan from February 1997 until July 1998. As leader of the Balochistan National Party, he has been vocal in demanding that the Baloch people be granted greater access to the province's natural resources.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Local people in Balochistan are demanding a bigger share of the revenue generated by the province's natural resources, principally natural gas, which they believe now benefit other provinces. A number of Balochi groups are seeking more rights for the province. Some of these groups have resorted to violence, while others are campaigning peacefully. The Pakistani national government has attempted to suppress this opposition by increasing the military presence in the region. Many people have died at the hands of the security forces in extrajudicial executions and deaths in custody, and dozens of people are reported to have "disappeared".

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

- expressing concern that Akhtar Mengal is reportedly being held incommunicado and without access to the medical care he needs, and calling on the authorities to give him immediate access to his family, lawyer, and all necessary medical care;
- calling on authorities to establish the whereabouts of the 15 missing Balochistan National Party members immediately;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that Akhtar Mengal's trial is in accordance with international fair trial standards, which include the right for the defendant to have full access to his counsel during the court proceedings; and for all court proceedings to be transparent allowing for human rights groups, the media and his family members to be present.
- calling on authorities to ensure that Akhtar Mengal is provided with proper bedding and given access to food from home, according to normal procedure in Pakistan.

APPEALS TO:

President Pervez Musharraf
Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: + 92 51 9221422 (please keep trying)
Email: via website: <http://www.presidentofpakistan.gov.pk/WTPresidentMessage.aspx>
Salutation: Dear President Musharraf

Chief of Military Intelligence
Ministry of Defence,
Chaklala.
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Salutation: Dear Chief Inspector

Mr. Muhammad Wasi Zafar
Minister of Law, Justice and Human Rights
Room 305, S-Block,
Pakistan Secretariat, Islamabad, Pakistan
Fax : + 92 51 9202628
Email: minister@molaw.gov.pk or wasizafar@hotmail.com
Salutation: Dear Minister

Rashid Alam
Home Secretary, Sindh Province
Email: secy.home@sindh.gov.pk or spsecy.home@sindh.gov.pk
Salutation: Dear Home Secretary

Awais Ghani
Governor of Balochistan
Governor House
Quetta, Pakistan
Fax. + 92 81 920 2178 / 2992
Salutation: Dear Governor

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 2 March 2007.*****