

PUBLIC

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Medical concern/unfair trial/
possible prisoner of conscience

19 September 2003

PAKISTAN

Rehmat Shah Afridi (m) Editor

Rehmat Shah Afridi, Editor of Pakistan's English language newspaper *The Frontier Post* and the Urdu daily *Maidan*, is reportedly being denied access to proper medical treatment for a heart condition which has recently worsened. He has reportedly lost a lot of weight and is not allowed a mattress despite having back problems. Until recently he was held in a cell on death row for 24 hours a day at Kot Lakhpat Prison in Lahore.

The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners article 22(2) states that "sick prisoners who require specialist treatment shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals." Relatives of Rehmat Shah Afridi recently requested the Home Secretary of Punjab to order that he be given access to proper medical treatment. In response, the Home Secretary of Punjab wrote to the prison doctor who confirmed that Rehmat Shah Afridi should be moved to the Punjab Institute of Cardiology. Despite this, he remains in prison. When relatives contacted the Home Ministry to enquire when he would be transferred to hospital, officials told them that the prison doctor was unreliable and another doctor would be sent to conduct an examination. To Amnesty International's knowledge, this has not yet happened.

Amnesty International believes that on the basis of available evidence, Rehmat Shah Afridi may be a prisoner of conscience and the charges against him are politically motivated. He was sentenced to death on drug trafficking charges following the publication in the *Maidan* of reports of corruption of government ministers, alleged links between the Anti-Narcotics Force [ANF] and military intelligence and the ANF and drug smugglers. Amnesty International understands that the prosecution did not produce compelling evidence to prove the charges against Rehmat Shah Afridi and that he was sentenced to death in June 2001, following an unfair trial. An appeal against the death sentence remains outstanding, as does a long term request for him to be transferred to a prison near his home in the North West Frontier Province.

Amnesty International has campaigned on behalf of Rehmat Shah Afridi's since his arrest in April 1999.

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

- calling on the Pakistani authorities to ensure that Rehmat Shah Afridi receives immediate medical care, including transfer to an appropriate medical facility if this is what medical staff recommend;
- calling on the Pakistani authorities to provide prison staff with training regarding their role in fulfilling Pakistan's international legal obligations concerning the treatment of detainees and prisoners;
- urging the Pakistani authorities to speedily consider Rehmat Shah Afridi's request for transfer to a prison in the North West Frontier Province.

APPEALS TO:

The Home Secretary of Punjab
The Home Secretary's Office
Punjab Civil Secretariat
Lahore

Punjab, Pakistan

Fax: +92 42 9211732

Salutation: Dear Home Secretary

COPIES TO:

Parvez Rahim Rajput

The Inspector General of Prisons, Punjab Province

District Camp Jail

Lahore

Punjab, Pakistan

Telegrams: Inspector General of Prisons, Lahore, Punjab

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

and 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 31 October 2003.