

PAKISTAN Akram Awan

Former Pakistan Air Force officer Akram Awan, who was jailed in 1991 after an unfair trial, is seriously ill with tuberculosis, but the prison authorities have refused to give him proper medical treatment.

He is held in Adyala Jail, in Rawalpindi. Prison doctors who have examined him there have reportedly recommended to the prison authorities that they move him to an outside hospital immediately, so he can receive necessary clinical tests and treatment. However, the Prison Superintendent has reportedly ignored these recommendations and refused to allow Akram Awan to be moved.

Tuberculosis (TB) can be fatal if untreated, and Akram Awan's life is in danger unless he receives proper treatment. The disease is highly contagious, particularly in a prison or other closed environment, and while he remains in the general prison population other prisoners and guards risk contracting TB from him. Under international standards he has a right to proper medical care, in a specialised medical institution or civil hospital if recommended by his doctors.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Akram Awan was court-martialed in October 1991 and sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment for carrying out anti-state activities, after allegations that he passed secret information to an unfriendly country. Akram Awan has protested his innocence and has sought to appeal against his conviction.

He was sentenced under the Pakistan Army Act, which at the time did not permit the right of appeal. Amnesty International is concerned that his trial did not meet international standards, particularly because he was denied the right of appeal.

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease spread by coughing, which is breathed in by those in contact with the infected person. It is a particular risk to those held in close contact with infected people, particularly in overcrowded closed environments. The risk of drug-resistant strains of TB has increased the danger of this disease. Prison and political authorities must be made aware that the failure to treat TB puts other prisoners and staff at risk of developing the disease, as well as leaving the affected prisoner at risk of deteriorating health, and possibly death.

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." The Baku Declaration on Tuberculosis and Prisons, adopted at a Red Cross-sponsored meeting in 1997, calls on "Governments, ministries of justice and interior and state security and health to work together towards providing prisoners with adequate health care and the means to cure tuberculosis."

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

- calling on the Pakistani authorities to ensure that Akram Awan receives immediate medical care, including transfer to an appropriate medical facility if this is what medical staff recommend;

- urging the authorities to educate prison and political authorities about the consequences of allowing tuberculosis to go untreated, including the threat to the life of the affected prisoner and the spread of the disease among other inmates, their families, prison staff, and their communities;
- calling on the Pakistan authorities to provide prison staff with training regarding their role in fulfilling Pakistan's international legal obligations concerning the treatment of detainees and prisoners.

Pakistani fax numbers can be very difficult to reach. Please be patient and keep trying.

APPEALS TO:

General Pervez Musharraf
Chief Executive
National Security Council
General Block, Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan

Faxes: + 92 51 922 4768

Email: CE@pak.gov.pk

Salutation:Dear Chief Executive

Lt. Gen (rtd) Moin-ud-din Haider
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control
Block R, Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: + 92 51 9202624

Salutation:Dear Minister

Barrister Shahida Jamil
Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
Block SNR, Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: + 92 51 9202628

E-mail: molaw1@comsats.net.pk

Salutation:Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Dr. Abdul Malik Kasi
Minister for Health
Ministry of Health
Pakistan Secretariat
Block C
Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: + 92 51 9213933/9205481

Salutation:Dear Minister

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 1 August 2001.