

UA 256/02

Fea.

**PAKISTANRukhsana Bunyad (f) and her family**

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Rukhsana Bunyad, an elected councillor from Mianwali, Punjab, was issued death threats by a local cleric and a death squad has been formed to carry them out. Amnesty International is concerned for her life and safety, as the authorities have taken no measures to protect her from the imminent danger of abuse.

On 7 August, Rukhsana Bunyad is alleged to have said during a seminar on South Asian Partnership at the Mianwali Press Club that "the Constitution of Pakistan was as important as the Holy Koran". Rukhsana subsequently denied having said this and some 35 participants of the seminar confirm this. However, a correspondent of a local Urdu language newspaper, *Naw-i-Waqt*, filed a complaint with police under Section 295A of the Pakistan Penal Code, alleging that the statement had hurt his religious feelings. Offences under Section 295A carry a maximum punishment of ten years' imprisonment and can be tried by special Anti-Terrorism Courts. Trials in such courts fall short of international standards for a fair trial. Rukhsana Bunyad has been denied pre-arrest bail and was arrested on 15 August.

In the meanwhile, a local cleric declared during Friday prayers on 16 August that Rukhsana Bunyad should be killed. Subsequently, a death squad has been formed to carry out the killing of Rukhsana and her family. No protection has been given to her and her family. The local mayor is reportedly taking part in the campaign against Rukhsana Bunyan.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Religiously motivated violence claims many lives in Pakistan. On 4 July, a man who had been charged with blasphemy but granted bail as he was mentally disturbed, was lynched by a mob in Chak Jumra, Punjab, after a local cleric issued a call to kill him. Police appears to have attempted to cover up the case and only after extensive media coverage arrested those involved in the killing. Less than a month earlier, a man sentenced to death for blasphemy was killed inside a jail by another convict with the possible connivance of prison staff.

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

- urging the authorities to take immediate, effective measures for the safety of Rukhsana Bunyan and her family;
- urging the authorities to investigate the campaign which includes calls to kill Rukhsana Bunyad and bring to justice anyone found guilty of incitement to violence, including murder;
- urging the authorities to publicly condemn religiously motivated violence and calls for violence.

**APPEALS TO:**

President Pervez Musharraf  
Pakistan Secretariat  
Islamabad  
Pakistan

**Telegram: President Musharraf, Islamabad, Pakistan**

**Fax: + 92-51-9224768**

**Email: ce@pak.gov.pk**

**Salutation: Dear President**

Lt.Gen. (r.) Moinuddin Haider  
Minister for the Interior  
Block R  
Pakistan Secretariat  
Islamabad  
Pakistan

**Telegram: Minister for the Interior, Islamabad, Pakistan**

**Fax: + 92-51-9212026**

**Email: minister@interior.gov.pk**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Lt.Gen. (r) Khalid Maqbool  
Governor of Punjab  
Governor's House  
Lahore  
Pakistan

**Telegram: Governor of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan**

**Fax: + 92-42-9200077**

**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 30 September 2002.