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## **Pakistan must improve protection for Indian prisoners in wake of jail attack**

Pakistani authorities must protect Indian prisoners from violence in the country's jails, Amnesty International said today after an Indian death row inmate died following an attack in a Lahore jail.

Sarabjit Singh was reportedly beaten with bricks and iron bars by other inmates while walking in the grounds of Kot Lakhpat prison on Friday. Singh's lawyer said the jail authorities had been warned that he had recently received death threats.

Singh was sentenced to death in 1991 for involvement in bombings that killed 14 people, although his family maintain he is innocent. He is the second Indian national to die in a Pakistani jail this year.

"Pakistani prison authorities have seemingly failed in their duty to protect Sarabjit Singh, despite him apparently receiving death threats," said Polly Truscott, Amnesty International's Deputy Asia Pacific Director.

"The government must now carry out an impartial, public investigation into this horrific attack and ensure that those responsible are promptly prosecuted in fair trials – including prison staff if the evidence shows their negligence may have helped facilitate the attack."

Political tensions between India and Pakistan put prisoners in both countries' jails at risk of attack by other inmates or prison wardens.

Sarabjit Singh's lawyer said he had been receiving death threats from inmates since India executed Kashmiri Afzal Guru in February over a 2001 attack on the Indian parliament.

Sources say Sarabjit Singh was held together with other Pakistani death row inmates instead of being kept separately in a high level security ward.

He had been in a coma in a Lahore hospital since the attack on 26 April, but died yesterday from his injuries.

So far, two inmates have been charged with murder over the attack and jail staff, including the head warden, have been suspended for negligence.

Sarabjit Singh was arrested in Pakistan in 1990 on charges of spying for the Indian government. He was convicted over four bomb attacks in Lahore and Faisalabad that killed 14 people in 1990.

Singh's family say he is a farmer who accidentally strayed into Pakistani territory while working.

Another Indian prisoner convicted of spying, Chamel Singh, also died in Kot Lakhpat jail in January.

A fellow inmate said he witnessed Chamel Singh being beaten to death by prison staff, while an autopsy found his body bore signs of torture.

Jail authorities claimed he had died from natural causes after suffering a stroke, but there has been no comprehensive inquiry into the death.

Hundreds of Indian and Pakistani prisoners have been transferred between the two countries under an agreement reached by the two governments in September 2012.

However, hundreds of others still languish in jail, including traders, farmers, fishermen and soldiers detained as “prisoners of war”. They are often detained on charges of spying and later sentenced to prison or even death.

Relatives and lawyers often complain that Indian and Pakistani authorities do not provide them with adequate access to these prisoners.

“Indian and Pakistani authorities must ensure that relatives and lawyers have adequate access to prisoners,” said Polly Truscott.

“As promised in April this year, Indian and Pakistani authorities should promptly repatriate prisoners charged with minor offences like overstaying visas or caught fishing in the other country’s waters, as recommended by the Indo-Pak Judicial Committee on prisoners.

“The Pakistani and Indian governments must also immediately commute all death sentences and establish an official moratorium on executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty.”

Pakistan resumed executions in November 2012, when military authorities executed soldier Muhammed Hussain for the killing of a superior officer and two others.

His was the first execution since 2008. India resumed executions the same month, hanging Ajmal Kasab, the lone surviving gunman from the 2008 Mumbai attacks, in the country’s first execution in more than eight years.