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Pakistan: Investigate the possible enforced disappearance and unlawful killing of political activist Raja Dahir Bhambro

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by reports of the enforced disappearance and killing of political activist, Raja Dahir Bhambro, whose death was confirmed by the Pakistan police on 25 July 2015.

The organization urges the Pakistan government to initiate an impartial, independent, efficient and transparent investigation into this case immediately, including into the alleged involvement of state forces, and to bring those who committed and those who ordered or covered these crimes to justice in fair trials and without recourse to the death penalty.

Raja Dahir is the son of a notable Sindhi writer and historian, and was affiliated with the banned Pakistani Sindhi nationalist party, Jeay Sindh Mutihida Muhaz (JSMM). According to eyewitnesses he was abducted during a raid by police and Rangers, a paramilitary police force, on his home in Bachal Bhanbhro village, Khairpur district on 4 June 2015, and subjected to enforced disappearance. Eyewitnesses alleged that Raja Dahir's house was surrounded by these forces, and he was beaten and forcibly taken away in a police vehicle.

Raja Dahir's fate and whereabouts were then unknown for over a month. His family lodged an appeal in the Sindh High Court requesting that he be produced in court, and the High Court ordered the Director of the Sindh Rangers and the Advocate General of the Government of Sindh to produce him. Raja Dahir's lawyer had complained that the Rangers and Advocate General were using delaying tactics through the court process, as they failed to comply with the Court's order and provide information about the incident.

Raja Dahir's dead body was recovered by the police a month later, on 5 July 2015, at Nooriabad near a highway in Jamshoro district. His family was informed by police about his death on 25 July, after verification of his finger prints by the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA). According to local media, citing the post-mortem report, Raja Dahir was shot in the forehead.

Human rights groups such as the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan have reported an increase since last year in the number of Sindhi political activists forcibly disappeared and

later found dead with bullet wounds and bodily marks consistent with torture. Political activists from the ethnic Sindhi and Baloch communities have been subjected to abductions, enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial executions in both provinces. Political and human rights activists, journalists, lawyers, and student leaders as well as members of armed groups are among those who have been targeted for enforced disappearance, abduction, torture and unlawful killing.

Pakistan is obliged under international human rights treaties to respect and protect the rights to life, liberty and freedom from torture and other international law of all within its territory. In addition, enforced disappearances, torture and unlawful killings are crimes under international law. Pakistan is further obliged to uphold the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution, such as freedom from torture, right not to be deprived of life, and ensure safeguards during arrest and detention including disclosing the place of detention of the detainee and due process. The Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) also criminalises kidnapping and abduction leading to the person being murdered (article 364), or hurt (article 367), and imposes strict penalties for the crimes related to concealing, wrongfully restraining, keeping a person in confinement, and wrongful confinement in secret (articles 339, 340, 346, 365, and 368).

A failure to investigate and criminally prosecute the apparent enforced disappearance and killing of Raja Dahir, allegedly carried out by the state forces, would constitute a violation of Pakistan's obligation under international and domestic law.