

URGENT ACTION

POLITICAL ACTIVIST FOUND DEAD IN PAKISTAN

Muzaffar Bhutto, a senior member of a Sindhi nationalist political party in Pakistan, was found dead on 22 May after being allegedly abducted by plain-clothed intelligence agents and police on 25 February 2011. Amnesty International calls for the killing to be investigated and the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Muzaffar Bhutto was the General-Secretary of Jeay Sindh Muttaheda Mahaz (JSMM), an ethnic Sindhi nationalist party. He was found dead on 22 May in Bukhari village, near Hyderabad city in Sindh province. On 25 February 2011, he was allegedly abducted by plain-clothed intelligence agents and police in Hyderabad city, Sindh province. Witnesses said around 20 men in plain clothes came out of unmarked cars and detained Muzaffar Bhutto at gunpoint. He was not seen again until his dead body was recovered. His body was reportedly found stuffed in a gunny bag, bearing torture marks with two bullet wounds, one to the head and one to his chest.

The manner of Muzaffar Bhutto's abduction, and the dumping and condition of his body fits a consistent and repeated pattern of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions of political activists and suspected insurgents by Pakistan's security forces including its intelligence agencies.

Since his abduction last year, Muzaffar Bhutto's family members had been actively campaigning for his release, despite anonymous calls demanding that they stop publicising his case, and frequent searches of their house by unknown individuals believed to be working for Pakistan's intelligence agencies or police.

Please write immediately in English or Urdu or your own language:

- Express concern at the abduction and killing of Muzaffar Bhutto allegedly involving state agents.
- Urge federal and Sindh authorities to ensure that a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation is conducted, the findings are made public, and that those responsible, including at the highest levels of command, are promptly brought to justice in fair trial without recourse to death penalty;
- Urge that the family of Muzaffar Bhutto is provided full reparation, and that any attempts to stop the family pursuing justice, are investigated and the perpetrators held accountable.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JULY 2012 TO:

Federal Minister of Interior

Mr. A Rehman Malik
R Block, Pak Secretariat Islamabad
Islamabad, Pakistan
Email:
ministry.interior@gmail.com
interior.complaintcell@gmail.com
Salutation: Dear Minister

Chief Minister of Sindh
Syed Qaim Ali Shah
Chief Minister House,
Dr Zaiuddin Ahmed Road
Karachi, Sindh Province
Pakistan
Fax: +92 21 992 02000
Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

And copies to:

Home Minister of Sindh
Karachi
Sindh Province
Pakistan

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 59/11. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA33/001/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Before Muzaffar Bhutto's body was found, his wife, Saima Bhutto had told Amnesty International: "If he is guilty in the eyes of the state or if he is a criminal then he should be charged. My children cry and ask me, when will he come back?"

In February 2011, Muzaffar Bhutto's family had filed an application for a First Information Report with police, seeking information about Muzaffar Bhutto's fate. On 28 February 2011 the family also filed a petition in the Sindh High Court claiming the intelligence agencies and police were responsible for Bhutto's disappearance. The Court did not locate Bhutto or provide any information about his whereabouts during the entire 15-month period of his disappearance. The government-established Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances also failed to obtain any further information about his fate. Witnesses who testified before the Commission said they felt threatened by state representatives present, were not provided any protection and were not notified of all hearings where Muzaffar Bhutto's case was being investigated.

In 2005 and 2006, Muzaffar Bhutto had allegedly been subjected to enforced disappearance and torture by the intelligence agencies, and later transferred to police custody where he was charged with terrorism offences and held until January 2009. He faced number of trials but was either released on bail or acquitted and was released in 2009.

Enforced disappearances have occurred frequently in Pakistan over the last 10 years. Before 2010, victims were typically released after a period ranging from days or weeks to months or years in a poor state of health and often alleging torture or inhuman and degrading treatment. In the last two years, Amnesty International has documented an increasing trend of disappearance victims being found dead countrywide, often bearing signs of torture and 'execution-style' bullet wounds to the head or chest. The authorities rarely conduct adequate investigations into such cases of possible disappearance and extrajudicial execution. Any victims of enforced disappearance who are subsequently released are often afraid to speak about their abduction and to identify the perpetrators. The victims claim they have been threatened that if they speak out or file a case in court against them, they will be picked up again and next time will not be spared.

In March 2010 the government set up the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances to trace the victims of enforced disappearance. Since last year, the Supreme Court and the provincial Higher Courts have managed to get the authorities to produce to the courts individuals previously held in secret detention, which would tend to confirm allegations of enforced disappearances made by relatives and some victims. The courts repeatedly demanded the authorities to charge or release individuals that are held in secret detentions. To Amnesty International's knowledge however, there has been no systematic attempt by the Commission to interview traced individuals to determine any patterns of disappearance, to facilitate assistance to them or their families, or to investigate named organisations or individuals accused of disappearances, especially personnel of security agencies or forces. There are no witness protection mechanisms in Pakistan and witnesses and relatives often complain that they have been subjected to intimidation before, during or after appearing at the Commission or courts.

Name: Muzaffar Bhutto

Gender: Male

Further information on UA: 59/11 Index: ASA 33/009/2012 Issue Date: 8 June 2012