

AI Index: PRE 01/291/2011
09 June 2011

Investigation into Pakistan student killing must lead to prosecution

Sarfaraz Shah, 25, was shot dead in a Karachi park on Wednesday by Karachi Rangers, a paramilitary police force under the authority of the Interior Ministry.

“Given Pakistan’s shockingly poor track record of prosecuting killings implicating Pakistani law enforcement officers, it is imperative that the authorities follow through on this case and ensure that those guilty are brought to justice”, said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International’s Asia-Pacific Director.

"The Pakistani people are rapidly losing patience with the rampant lawlessness and impunity of the security forces that are ostensibly protecting them," he added.

"At some point, the government has to show that it can and will provide justice to its citizens, even in cases involving its law enforcement agents," he said.

Footage broadcast on Pakistani television shows a Rangers officer shooting the 25-year-old twice at point-blank range.

According to local media reports, Sarfaraz Shah was detained on suspicion of attempting an armed robbery. However, there is no evidence in the footage that he was armed at the time of the shooting.

The Chief Minister of Pakistan’s Sindh province has ordered an inquiry and suspended a senior police official.

However, previous cases involving killings by Pakistani police officers have often failed to bring justice to the victims.

Police were filmed facilitating the lynching of two youths in Sialkot on August 15, 2010. Although they were later arrested, all were subsequently released on bail and the victims’ families fear that the individuals accused of the murders will be not be convicted.

On 17 May in Quetta, Balochistan, members of the paramilitary Frontier Corp were accused of shooting dead five allegedly unarmed people. The victims included three women, one of whom was pregnant.

Provincial authorities announced a judicial inquiry but no one has been arrested or prosecuted over the killings.