

URGENT ACTION

END ARBITRARY DETENTION OF MAHAL BALOCH

Mahal Baloch, a 28-year-old Baloch woman, has been arbitrarily detained in Quetta by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of the police since 18 Feb 2023, after her home was unlawfully raided. Her two daughters, aged 8 and 5, were separated from her and detained for one night. She remains in remand custody of the CTD without charge. Mahal has been produced before courts four times and each time the CTD has asked for a custody extension. Authorities must immediately release Mahal Baloch or charge her with a recognizable offence, in accordance with international human rights law.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Honourable Rana Sanaullah Khan
Minister of Interior,
R-Block Pak Secretariat,
Constitution Ave,
Islamabad, Pakistan
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Email: secretary@interior.gov.pk

Dear Honourable Rana Sanaullah Khan,

I write to you out of extreme concern for **Mahal Baloch**, a 28-year-old Baloch woman has been arbitrarily detained by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of the police in Quetta, Balochistan. Mahal has been detained for over one month without charge. This is a violation of Mahal's fair trial rights including the right to be free from arbitrary arrest and to be promptly informed of any charges against her. Mahal's prolonged detention is a violation of international fair trial standards and Pakistan's legal international human rights obligations including under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

On 17 February 2023, Mahal's home was unlawfully raided at 11pm. A total of six female family members, including Mahal, Mahal's two daughters (age 8 & 5), her niece (age 12), Mahal's sister-in-law and Mahal's mother were detained overnight at the CTD office. On 18 March, Mahal was brought before the Anti-Terrorism court where the court permitted her to be physically remanded for 7 days. Mahal's detention contravenes fair trial safeguards enshrined in international human rights law.

Mahal has been produced before courts four times, with the CTD requesting her remand custody be extended, without formally charging her. In light of the circumstances of Mahal's arrest, her detention is arbitrary and unlawful.

As such, I urge you to:

- **Immediately release Mahal Baloch, unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that she has committed an internationally recognized offence;**
- **Pending her release or charge, authorities must ensure her fair trial rights are guaranteed, that she has the right to challenge the lawfulness of her detention and has access to bail hearings;**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mahal Baloch is a 28-year-old Baloch woman and sole parent of her two daughters, aged 8 and 5, after her husband passed away in 2016. Mahal's sister-in-law, Bibi Gul, is the founder and chairperson of the Baloch Human Rights Organization which documents human rights violations in the province of Balochistan. Given her family's activism, Mahal has participated in a number of protests, specifically against enforced disappearances which plague Balochistan. Amnesty International has previously documented how enforced disappearances of students, activists, journalists and human rights defenders continue relentlessly in the province.

On 17 February at 11pm, the home of Mahal Baloch was raided by 12 security agents. The agents had not provided a warrant or any sort of legal documentation ahead of or during the raid. Following the unlawful raid of the house, Mahal Baloch, her mother, sister-in-law, niece (aged 12) and two daughters (aged 8 and 6 years) were forced into two cars and taken to the office of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of the police, on Spinney Road in Quetta. Mahal was separated from the other detained women and girls in the vehicles and while at the CTD office. Mahal's niece, told the Human Rights Council of Balochistan that during their detention they could hear Mahal screaming while being interrogated.

According to the Human Rights Council of Balochistan, on 18 February, the other detained women and girls were released and dropped off in an isolated area where they had to walk for 30 to 45 minutes to find transportation back to their home. On this day however, Mahal was produced before the Anti-Terrorism Court, (ATC) without her family being informed. The ATC permitted Mahal to be kept in remand custody for seven days. Subsequent to this, the ATC extended the period of her detention on 24 February and 4 March. On 14 March, Mahal was brought before the Sessions Court which then extended her detention by another 10 days. Despite being produced before court four times, the CTD are yet to charge Mahal with a crime.

The human rights crisis in Balochistan continues with reports of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings by the security forces of suspected Baloch militants and opposition activists who are accused by the government of terrorist activities. Amnesty International takes no position on the guilt or innocence of those alleged to have taken part in attacks characterized by governments as acts of terrorism. However, everyone must be able to enjoy the full range of human rights guaranteed under national and international law. Amnesty International denounces indiscriminate attacks and attacks targeting civilians carried out by armed groups, and fully recognizes the duty of the Pakistani authorities to prevent and punish crimes, including violent crimes such as acts of terrorism, and to bring to justice those suspected to be responsible for committing such crimes. However, by subjecting persons suspected of terrorist activities or links with terrorist groups to enforced disappearance, Pakistan has not only gravely violated their human rights but also failed in its duty to charge and try such individuals in a fair trial.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 18 May 2023

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Mahal Baloch, She/Her