

URGENT ACTION

AILING PROFESSOR GRANTED BAIL, CHARGES REMAIN

Professor Muhammad Ismail was finally granted bail by the Peshawar High Court on 12 April 2021, almost three months since his pre-arrest bail was cancelled on 2 February. This comes after weeks of court delays in holding his bail hearing, throughout which he was detained in a prison with a known COVID-19 outbreak. The trumped-up charges of “terror financing” have not yet been dropped, and he remains at risk of a lengthy sentence if convicted. Professor Ismail’s trial is currently being heard by an Anti-Terrorism Court in Peshawar.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Professor Muhammad Ismail was released on bail on 12 April 2021 by the Peshawar High Court, after having spent three months in jail following the cancellation of his pre-arrest bail.

Professor Ismail is 66 years old and of ill health, with a severe heart condition that was exacerbated by a COVID-19 diagnosis earlier this year. His immune system is weak, and nearly three months in an overcrowded jail cell in a prison with a known COVID-19 outbreak has not helped. During his detention, Professor Ismail’s health deteriorated significantly, as reflected by a prescription from the jail hospital indicating additional medications for his heart condition.

Despite his release on bail, the trumped-up charges against him have still not been dropped. On 24 February 2021, the National Assembly’s Human Rights Committee questioned the validity of the police evidence used to detain Professor Ismail, stating that due diligence was not carried out to bring forward the charges against him.

A vocal critic of the country’s armed forces and their treatment of his daughter, prominent woman human rights defender Gulalai Ismail, the Ismail family has endured invasive surveillance, threats and intimidation since May 2019. Professor Ismail and his wife, Uzlifat Ismail, remain on the country’s no-fly list and he has also stopped sharing his views on social media following a warning by the Peshawar High Court on 29 January 2019.

Freedom of expression, assembly and association have come under attack in Pakistan in recent years. Human rights defenders and journalists face restrictions in both online and offline spaces. The clampdown on civic space has intensified through draconian laws that enable violations of human rights.

It is believed that international attention had a positive impact on Professor Muhammad Ismail’s situation. Upon her father’s bail being granted, Gulalai sent her thanks to Amnesty International, saying that “she would not have been able to survive without your [Amnesty’s] support.”

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the case and respond as appropriate to any developments that may arise.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Professor Muhammad Ismail (He/Him)

THIS IS THE FOURTH AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 148/19

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/3626/2021/en/>