

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Prisoners of conscience / Health concern 9 June 1995

PAKISTAN

Zafar Yab Ahmad, aged about 40, journalist  
Mohammad Salim ) workers with the  
Fatima (f) ) Bonded Labour Liberation  
Karamat Ali ) Front (BLLF)

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The four people named above have been arrested in Lahore. Amnesty International believes they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for their work for the liberation of bonded labour in Pakistan, particularly child labour, and for having published reports holding carpet-makers responsible for the murder of child activist Iqbal Masih on 16 April 1995.

Zafar Yab Ahmad, a journalist with "The News" in Lahore and associated with the Bonded Labour Liberation Front (BLLF), was arrested at his house on 5 June.

He was reportedly pushed and beaten during arrest and taken to an undisclosed location by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). His whereabouts remained unclear until 6 June when he was brought before the Lahore High Court on his lawyer's *habeas corpus* petition.

During his first day in detention at the FIA Centre, Model Town, Lahore, where he is currently held, Zafar Yab Ahmad had no access to a lawyer or to his family.

It is not known if he has received sufficient medical attention for his heart condition. A hearing of his bail application has been set for 21 June.

On 7 June three members of the BLLF, Mohammad Salim, Fatima, and Karamat Ali, were arrested on unknown charges and there were reports that the FIA was surrounding the BLLF headquarters in Lahore and that a raid appeared imminent.

According to unconfirmed reports, 13 relatives of Iqbal Masih, including his mother and sister, have also been arrested.

The FIA's Economic Crime Wing has charged Zafar Yab Ahmad and the president of the BLLF, Ehsanullah Khan, who is currently in Europe, with sedition and collusion with the Indian intelligence agency, RAW. The First Information Report (FIR) filed on 5 June, says that the RAW "has set up a plan to exploit the murder of Iqbal Masih with a view of causing a recurring financial loss to the Pakistan business interest abroad ... to pave the way for economic warfare against Pakistan". The two are also accused of having conspired with another person abroad to divulge and distribute material on "human rights violations and maltreatment of minorities in Pakistan".

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iqbal Masih was a boy aged about 12 who had been active in working for the liberation of other children from bondage. After he was murdered in Muridke in Punjab province, spokespersons of the carpet industry of Pakistan repeatedly denied any involvement. The non-governmental Human Rights Commission of Pakistan investigated the incident and concluded that the murder had nothing to do with Iqbal Masih's political work.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- urging the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the four people named above, and to drop the charges of sedition and conspiracy against Zafar Yab Ahmad and Ehsanullah Khan;

- seeking assurances that, while Zafar Yab Ahmad is in detention, he will be provided with adequate medical attention;
- seeking assurances that all the detainees will be granted prompt and regular access to family and relatives;
- seeking assurances that none of the prisoners is subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment.

**APPEALS TO**

1. President Farooq Ahmad Leghari  
Office of the President  
Islamabad  
**Faxes +92 51 811390**  
**Telexes: 54058 PSPUB PK**  
**Telegrams: President Leghari, Islamabad, Pakistan**  
**Salutation: Dear President**

2. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Islamabad, Pakistan  
**Faxes: +92 51 821835 or 823144 or 821968**  
**Telexes: 5742 PMH PK**  
**Telegrams: Prime Minister Bhutto, Islamabad, Pakistan**  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

3. Mr Nabi Dad Khan  
Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs  
Ministry of Law and Justice  
Pak Secretariat  
Islamabad, Pakistan  
**Telegrams: Minister of Law, Islamabad, Pakistan**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

diplomatic representatives of Pakistan accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 July 1995.