

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Pakistan: Government must stop unlawful killings in Balochistan**

Amnesty International strongly condemns the killing of Professor Saba Dashtiyari and calls on the Pakistan government to bring his killers to justice.

Professor Saba Dashtiyari succumbed to his injuries after being shot repeatedly by unidentified gunmen on Wednesday evening (1 June) on Sariab Road in Quetta while on his way home.

Professor Dashtiyari was a renowned intellectual, writer and poet and a professor at the University of Balochistan in the province's capital. He was the author of several books on Baloch literature and culture and a scholar in Islamic studies. Over the past few years, he reportedly backed the call for resorting to arms for an independent Balochistan.

No one has yet claimed responsibility for Dashtiyari's killing, though Baloch groups have accused the Pakistani security forces, notably the Frontier Corps, of carrying out his killing.

Amnesty International reminds the government of Pakistan of its legal obligation under international law to respect the right to life in all circumstances. The organization calls on the Pakistan authorities to ensure an independent, impartial, transparent and thorough investigation into the incident and to bring all those suspected of involvement in his killing, including any persons with command responsibility, to justice in fair trials and without the imposition of the death penalty.

Professor Dashtiyari's family should be awarded reparations in accordance with international standards. The organization also calls on the Pakistan government to take urgent steps to end killings and abductions in Balochistan, which have increased at an alarming rate during the past year, resulting in the deaths of over 150 political activists, journalists, lawyers and students. All cases should be investigated, all those suspected of responsibility be prosecuted and the families of victims should be compensated. The government should also investigate all other alleged human rights abuses, including all enforced disappearances recorded by the judicial Commission of Inquiry for Missing Persons.

#### **Background:**

Balochistan has a long history of civil and armed unrest since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, with a number of ethnic Baloch groups advocating greater autonomy within the state or complete separation. Five waves of violent unrest have taken place in Balochistan in 1948, 1958-59, 1962-63 and 1973-77 and 2005 to the present. Each has been met by a brutal crackdown by Pakistan's security forces.

A critical driver of unrest is the Baloch community's demand for a greater share in the allocation of revenues generated by the province's natural resources. Although Balochistan is the largest single source of domestic energy reserves in Pakistan, Baloch groups argue these resources disproportionately benefit other provinces and ethnic communities.

Some Baloch groups have resorted to violence, while others are campaigning peacefully and some contest local, provincial and federal elections. In response, the Pakistan government has attempted to suppress this opposition by increasing military operations in the province that often do not distinguish between peaceful and armed Baloch groups.

The confrontation between Baloch groups and the state is characterised by human rights abuses committed both by government forces and armed Baloch groups.