

URGENT ACTION

PAKISTANI DEFENDER FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED

Human rights defender and Convenor of Voice for Missing Persons of Sindh, Punhal Sario, has been forcibly disappeared in Sindh Province, southern Pakistan. This is another example in a string of recent enforced disappearances by the security forces in Sindh. His fate and whereabouts remain unknown. He is at grave risk of torture, ill-treatment, and even death.

Punhal Sario, a human rights defender and Convenor of the Voice for Missing Persons of Sindh, was subjected to enforced disappearance on the night of 3 August. His friend Dr. Haresh Kumar, who was with Punhal Sario at the time, witnessed the abduction. Dr. Haresh claims Punhal Sario was taken from his car by individuals in civilian clothing and police uniforms when he was coming out of Khanabadosh Writer's Café, which is part of the Sindh Museum in Hyderabad, in the Sindh province of Pakistan. His fate and whereabouts remain unknown since then.

Mr. Punhal Sario had been part of a civil society effort to raise awareness of the growing trend of enforced disappearances of activists, writers, and political workers in Sindh under the newly established forum Voice for Missing Persons of Sindh. He was picked up a day before a large conference organised by the forum. This aimed at bringing together writers, journalists, activists, and intellectuals to awareness of the situation of missing persons in Sindh.

Local Sindhi activists claim that as many as 60 activists have been forcibly disappeared in the past few months from Sindh. This includes political workers Khadim Areejo, Hidayat Lohar, Sabir Chandio, and Bux Ali Mugheri belonging to Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz.

Please write immediately in English, Urdu or Sindhi:

- Urging the Pakistani authorities to order an immediate investigation into Punhal Sario's fate and whereabouts, keeping his family fully informed and updated at all times;
- Insisting that, if Punhal Sario is in the state's custody, that he is immediately released, or, if credible evidence of a recognised offence exists, is transferred to an official place of detention charged promptly and remanded by an independent civilian court, in line with international human rights standards;
- Urging them to ensure that Punhal Sario's human rights are protected and respected at all time, including – if he is in custody – his right to life and freedom from torture and other ill-treatment, and that he is allowed access to his family, a lawyer of his choice and adequate medical care;
- Urging them to order an immediate, impartial, independent and efficient investigation into this and all other enforced disappearances, publicly disclose the findings and bring those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO:

President of Pakistan
Honourable Mr Mamnoon Hussain
President's Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan
Fax: +92 51 920 8479
Twitter: @Mamnoon_hussain
Salutation: Your Excellency

Prime Minister of Pakistan
Shahid Khaqan Abbasi
Prime Minister's House Secretariat,
Constitution Avenue Islamabad, Pakistan
Fax: +92 51 922 0404 (PM Secretariat)
Twitter: @shahidKAbbasi
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Chief Minister of Sindh
Murad Ali Shah
Chief Minister Secretariat
Dr. Zia ud Din Ahmed Road Karachi
Fax: +92 21 992 02000
Twitter: @SayedMuradShah
Salutation: Dear Chief Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR SYED IBNE ABBAS, High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 35-36 Lowndes Square SW1X 9JN tel: 020 7664 9284 Fax 020 7664 9224 or 020 7664 9227 (Ambassador's office) email: poldiv@phclondon.org and [cwg@phclondon.org](mailto:cwd@phclondon.org) and suggestions@phclondon.org web: www.phclondon.org facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pakistanihighcommissionuk> twitter: <https://twitter.com/phclondon> Salutation: Your Excellency

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The practice of enforced disappearances has been an ongoing phenomenon in Sindh since at least a decade, but local activists claim that since February 2017, the numbers of people that have gone missing has reached unprecedented heights. Political activists, writers, and human rights defenders have been picked up, allegedly by security agencies, from all over Sindh. According to local activists, as many as 60 individuals remain missing.

Enforced disappearances in Pakistan have been historically restricted to Balochistan, FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and urban Sindh, but are now taking place in Punjab province and the capital Islamabad as well. In August 2015, journalist Zeenat Shahzadi was abducted in Lahore, Punjab, by armed gunmen on her way to work. She is believed to be the first woman to have been subjected to an enforced disappearance in Pakistan. Before she was abducted, she had been reporting on the case of Hamid Ansari, an Indian national who had gone missing in 2012. Zeenat Shahzadi is still missing. In early January 2017, five human rights defenders were abducted from Islamabad and parts of the Punjab province. Four of the five – academic and poet Salman Haider, bloggers Asim Saeed, Ahmed Raza Naseer and Waqass Goraya – returned home between 27 and 29 January 2017. At the time of writing, one of them, Samar Abbas, is still missing.

Under international law, the right to life and freedom from torture and other ill-treatment are non-derogable, and apply in all circumstances. Pakistan is obliged to respect and protect these rights under several human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In addition, the prohibition of enforced disappearance is a rule of customary international law binding on all states and an international crime. Under Article 2 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, each state has a duty to create the conditions necessary to defend human rights within their jurisdictions. However, human rights defenders in Pakistan continue to be arrested, detained, tortured and imprisoned simply for their involvement in peaceful activities. Human rights defenders in Pakistan also face intimidation and harassment. Amnesty International calls on the Government of Pakistan to ensure an environment in which it is possible to defend human rights as well as peacefully express political opinions without fear of reprisal or intimidation.

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