

URGENT ACTION

PAKISTANI ACTIVIST'S WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

Raza Khan, a Pakistani peace activist, has not been seen or heard from since 2 December and may have been subject to an enforced disappearance.

Raza Khan, a peace activist based in Lahore, has been missing since 2 December, raising fears that he may have been subject to an enforced disappearance. Raza Khan left his office in Lahore's Garden Town neighbourhood on 2 December at around 7pm and never reached home. He was staying in a rented room in Model Colony, near Lahore's Firdous Market. With his phone shut off and not hearing from him; his friend checked on him on 3 December and found that his room was locked with the lights on. Raza Khan's family has reported the incident to the police in Firdous Market and the Superintendent of Police in Model Town has been in touch with the family.

Raza Khan is a well-liked and highly regarded activist who has campaigned for peace between India and Pakistan. He is the Pakistan Convenor of "Aghaz-e-Dosti", which brings people together from both sides of the border through art and letter-writing. Raza Khan is also a member of the Awami Art Collective and has been involved in Lahore civil society since the days of the lawyers' movement for an independent judiciary and against emergency rule a decade ago. Recently, Raza Khan has organised a discussion on "religious extremism" after violent protests in Islamabad led to the resignation of the Law Minister.

There are fears that Raza Khan may have been subject to an enforced disappearance. Over recent years, enforced disappearances – once limited to the restive parts of Baluchistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces – have spread deep into Pakistan's main urban centres.

Pakistan's Commission on Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances received nearly 300 cases of alleged enforced disappearances from August to October 2017, by far the largest number in a three-month period in recent years. Over the past two months, Amnesty International has received credible reports of an alarming number of disappearances of Baluch students and activists.

Please write immediately in English or Urdu or in your own language:

- Urging the Pakistani authorities to order an immediate investigation into Raza Khan's fate and whereabouts, keeping his family fully informed and updated at all times;
- Urging them to order an immediate, impartial, independent and efficient investigation into this and all other possible enforced disappearances, publicly disclose the findings and bring those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty;
- Urging the authorities to end the practice of enforced disappearances and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
- Calling on them to ensure that activists, human rights defenders, journalists, academics and members of the political opposition are able to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 JANUARY 2018 TO:

Chief Minister of Punjab

Chief Minister Secretariat

7-Club Road

GOR-1, Lahore

Tel: +92 42 992 04906

Fax: +92 42 992 04915

Twitter: @CMShehbaz / @GovtOfPunjab

Salutation: Honourable Chief Minister

Inspector General of Punjab Police

Captain (R) Arif Nawaz Khan

CPO Complex, Bank Road, Old Anarkali

Lahore, Pakistan

Phone: +92 42 992 10062

Fax: +92 42 992 10064

Email: psogigp.cpo@punjabpolice.gov.pk

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

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 email: poldiv@phclondon.org Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Enforced disappearances are a blight on Pakistan's human rights record, with hundreds and possibly thousands of cases reported across the country over the past several years. Victims of enforced disappearances are at considerable risk of torture and other ill-treatment and even death. To date, not a single perpetrator of the crime has been brought to justice.

After its last visit to Pakistan, in 2012, the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, noted that there is "a climate of impunity in Pakistan with regard to enforced disappearances, and the authorities are not sufficiently dedicated to investigate cases of enforced disappearance and hold the perpetrators accountable." Amnesty International notes that this situation has not improved over the past five years.

Pakistan's authorities must publicly condemn enforced disappearances, recognize enforced disappearances as a distinct and autonomous offence, and call for an end to this cruel and inhumane practice. Pakistan has thus far failed to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance – a glaring omission that casts an unflattering light on the country's claims to be committed to the highest human rights standards.

The UN Human Rights Committee - the treaty-monitoring body that oversees how States implement and comply with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – took note of Pakistan's record on enforced disappearances and recommended that the country: "Criminalize enforced disappearance and put an end to the practice of enforced disappearance and secret detention," and "Ensure that all allegations of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings are promptly and thoroughly investigated; all perpetrators are prosecuted and punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crimes".

On October 16, Pakistan became one of 15 states elected by the UN General Assembly to serve as members of the UN Human Rights Council, from January 2018 to December 2020. In its election pledges, Pakistan said that it is "firmly resolved to uphold, promote and safeguard universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for all."

Once confined to the restive territories of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Baluchistan, enforced disappearances have spread to other parts of the country, including urban centres and major cities. In early January 2017, five human rights defenders were abducted from the capital Islamabad and parts of Punjab province. Four of the defenders returned to their homes between 27 and 29 January. Two of the defenders have since said that they were threatened, intimidated and tortured by people they believed to belong to military intelligence.