

URGENT ACTION

DISAPPEARED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AT RISK OF TORTURE

Deedar Ali Shabrani, a journalist from Pakistan's Sindh province, is believed to have been forcibly disappeared and may be at high risk of torture and death. No information about his whereabouts are known since he was taken from his home by armed men in the early hours of 16 December 2017.

Deedar Ali Shabrani, a writer, poet and journalist working with Dharti TV, has not been seen or heard from since he was taken from his home on 16 December 2017, raising fears that he may have been subject to an enforced disappearance. Deedar Ali Shabrani is known to have been critical of the Pakistan government's policies toward his native province and for highlighting concerns of enforced disappearances in Sindh province.

Amnesty International fears that Deedar Ali Shabrani is at high risk of torture and other ill-treatment or even death – as suffered by several other victims of enforced disappearances in Pakistan.

Victims of enforced disappearances have included bloggers, journalists, activists and other human rights defenders. The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has more than 700 cases from Pakistan, while Pakistan's own State Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances is currently dealing with more than twice as many cases. Local human rights groups believe that these cases represent a fraction of the total number of people forcibly disappeared.

Few punishments are as cruel and deliberate as enforced disappearances. People are wrenched away from their loved ones by state officials or others acting on their behalf. They deny the person is in their custody or refuse to say where they are. Families are plunged into a state of anguish, trying to keep the flame of hope alive while fearing the worst. They may be in this limbo for years.

Please write immediately in English or Urdu or in your own language urging the authorities to:

- Order an immediate investigation into Deedar Ali Shabrani's fate and whereabouts, keeping his family fully informed and updated at all times;
- End the practice of enforced disappearances and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
- 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 5 JUNE 2018 TO:

Chief Minister of Sindh

Mr Murad Ali Shah
Chief Minister Secretariat
Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed Road
Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
Tel: +92 21 99202051
Fax: +92 21 99202000
Twitter: @SindhCMHouse

Salutation: Honourable Chief Minister

Director General, Pakistan Rangers (Sindh)

Major General Muhammad Saeed
Muslim Jinnah Courts Buildings
Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed Road
Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
Phone: +92 21 99205285 / +92 21 99205286
Fax: +92 42 992 10064
Email: help@pakistanrangerssindh.org
Salutation: Dear Major General

And copies to:

Inspector General of Police, Sindh
Allah Dino Khoja, PSP
Sindh Police Head Office
I.I. Chundrigar Road
Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
Tel: +92 21 99212626 Fax: +92 21 99212051
E-mail:
aigcomplaints.cpo@sindhpolice.gov.pk

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.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Deedar Ali Shabrani was at his home in Shahnawaz Shar Village in Karachi, the capital of the southeast Pakistani province of Sindh, when a group of armed men, suspected to be from Pakistan's security forces, entered and took him away in the early hours of 16 December 2017. His family, including small children, have been calling for his release, joining other families of the disappeared. A petition was also lodged with the Sindh High Court, but there has been no movement in his case.

Pakistan has repeatedly made a commitment at the UN Human Rights Council, where it sits as an elected member and is duly expected to uphold the highest human rights standards, to criminalise enforced disappearances but has consistently failed to do so. At the most recent review of its human rights record, at the Universal Periodic Review, Pakistan declined recommendations - including from countries, like Chile and Argentina, with a traumatic history of disappearances - to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

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 16 October 2017, 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 belong to military intelligence.