

URGENT ACTION

FIVE POLITICAL ACTIVISTS AT RISK OF TORTURE

Five political activists; four from the Muttahida Quami Movement political party, one from the Pak Sarzameen Party, are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment while awaiting trial.

Waseem Akhtar, Rauf Siddiqui, Tahir Ghaffar and Zeeshan Bashir Farooqui, members of the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) political party, and the president of the Pak Sarzameen Party, **Anis Qaimkhani**, are in police custody in Karachi, awaiting trial on different criminal charges, including for criticising state security forces. Amnesty International is concerned that they are at serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment while in custody.

Waseem Akhtar, the MQM's mayoral candidate for Karachi, Rauf Siddiqui and Anis Qaimkhani were arrested on 19 July on charges of helping terrorism suspects' access medical care at a local hospital and for criticising state security forces. In separate incidents also on 19 July, Tahir Ghaffar and Zeeshan Bashir Farooqui were arrested by the police in different parts of Karachi on charges of illegal firearms possession. The five men have denied all the charges against them. Rauf Siddiqui and Anis Qaimkhani are currently being held at Central Prison Karachi, while Waseem Akhtar, Tahir Ghaffar and Zeeshan Farooqui are being held by police in Karachi's Malir District. Amnesty International has received scores of credible allegations over the last 12 months of individuals being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, extra-judicial killings and other violations by law enforcement personnel in Malir districts and other parts of the city of Karachi, Sindh province. Relatives and lawyers of the five men have complained that they have only been given limited access to them since their arrest.

Over the last year, law enforcement authorities in the city of Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, have been implicated in the arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture and extra-judicial killing of political activists and terrorism suspects. This includes scores of MQM members. In the media and in political rallies, both Waseem Akhtar and Rauf Siddiqui have been vocal critics of the Rangers, a state paramilitary force that has been involved in law enforcement operations in Karachi, for their alleged involvement in human rights violations against members of the MQM.

Please write immediately in Urdu or your own language:

- Urging the Pakistani authorities to ensure that, while detained, the five men are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and that the conditions of their detention adhere to international law and standards;
- Urging them to ensure that Waseem Akhtar, Tahir Ghaffar, Rauf Siddiqui, Zeeshan Bashir Farooqui, and Anis Qaimkhani are given a fair trial and all due process rights in line with international standards;
- Demanding that the authorities order a prompt, independent, and effective investigation by a civilian authority into reports of torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement personnel, and bring anyone found responsible to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty, regardless of their rank or status.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 SEPTEMBER 2016 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

Muhammad Nawaz Sharif

Prime Minister House

Secretariat, Constitution Avenue

Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: +92 51 922 0404 (PM Secretariat)

Twitter: @PMNawazSharif

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Chief Minister of Sindh

Qaim Ali Shah

Chief Minister Secretariat

Dr. Zia ud Din Ahmed Road Karachi

Fax: +92 21 992 02000

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, email:

poldiv@phclondon.org and cwd@phclondon.org and suggestions@phclondon.org web: www.phclondon.org facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pakistanhighcommissionuk> 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

Amnesty International has received scores of credible allegations of violations committed by members of the police and the paramilitary unit, Rangers. An executive order giving the Rangers authority to carry out law enforcement activities in Karachi expired at midnight on 19 July, but fears remain that the paramilitary force and other state forces will continue to perpetrate violations. Individuals from all backgrounds have been subjected to human rights violations, including members of political parties and human rights defenders. Amnesty International is concerned that existing security laws and practices, and the absence of any independent, impartial and transparent mechanisms to investigate the Rangers and other state security forces, have enabled an environment in which state forces have near total impunity to perpetrate violations in Karachi.

Scores of political activists from the MQM and other political parties have been arbitrarily arrested. On the morning of 3 May, Aftab Ahmed, an assistant to a senior MQM leader who had been detained by the Rangers in Karachi, was brought to Jinnah Hospital complaining of chest pains and died the same morning. His body bore what appeared to be signs of torture. A day later and under public pressure, the Director-General of the Rangers for Sindh admitted that Aftab Ahmed had been tortured while in custody but denied that his forces were responsible for his death. The Chief of Army Staff subsequently ordered an investigation into Aftab's torture and killing. According to media reports, five Rangers soldiers were suspended, but no further information on the investigations and any proceedings against the soldiers has been provided by the Pakistani authorities.

For the last several years, members of the MQM have been implicated in the harassment, abduction, torture and targeted killing of political opponents, journalists critical of them, and others. On 1 March 2014, six men were convicted of the murder of Wali Khan Babar, a Geo TV correspondent in January 2011. Four of the men received life terms while two others, tried in absentia, were sentenced to death. Babar was shot dead as he was driving home from work in Karachi. He had just filed his latest report on gang-related violence in the city and alleged links between a gambling syndicate and the MQM. Although the court did not hold the MQM responsible for the murder, it noted that the six were known "target killers" associated with the party, leaving serious questions as to the possible involvement of the MQM or senior members of the party in the killing of Wali Khan Babar. A number of the men convicted for the murder claimed that their confessions were extracted under torture by police personnel.

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