

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AT RISK OF TORTURE

**Human rights defender Wahid Baloch may have been subjected to enforced disappearance by state security forces in Karachi, Pakistan, on the afternoon of 26 July. His family does not know where he is or what has happened to him. He is at grave risk of ill-treatment, torture, or even death. Scores of other activists who have been forcibly disappeared in Karachi and the neighbouring province of Balochistan have suffered similar fates in recent years.**

According to eyewitnesses, human rights defender and ethnic Baloch political activist **Wahid Baloch** was taken by masked men in plain clothes from a highway toll plaza on the outskirts of Karachi on the afternoon of 26 July. He was on his way to Karachi city from Mirpurkhas in interior Sindh along with friends, who were unharmed. Local police told the family that they have no information about who took Wahid Baloch or his whereabouts, and as far as Amnesty International is aware the authorities have failed to carry out a prompt and thorough investigation. This is despite state security forces having a long history of subjecting Baloch activists to enforced disappearances, as acknowledged by both the Chief Minister of Balochistan and the Pakistan Supreme Court in 2013. The incident took place close to a major base of the paramilitary Rangers state security force. A telephone operator at a public hospital in Karachi, Wahid Baloch was an active human rights defender who frequently attended public rallies in the city calling for the recovery of Baloch victims of abductions and alleged enforced disappearance by state forces.

Activists calling for greater autonomy for the Baloch population, or demanding justice for state violations are seen by the Pakistani authorities as being “anti-state” and are particularly vulnerable to these violations. Wahid Baloch’s abduction follows a pattern of enforced disappearances of individuals belonging to the ethnic Baloch community from the province of Balochistan and in and around the city of Karachi, in Sindh province.

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

- Urging the Pakistani authorities to order an immediate investigation into Wahid Baloch’s fate and whereabouts, keeping his family fully informed and updated at all times;
- Insisting that, if Wahid Baloch 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 court, in line with international human rights standards;
- Urging them to ensure that Wahid Baloch’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 apparent enforced disappearance, publicly disclose its findings and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 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: @pmln\_org  
**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.** Please check if sending appeals after the above date  
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 email: [poldiv@phclondon.org](mailto:poldiv@phclondon.org) Salutation: Your Excellency

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Human rights defenders and political activists from the ethnic Baloch community have been subjected to abductions, enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial executions in Pakistan's Balochistan province and in and around the city of Karachi in the neighbouring province of Sindh. Scores of individuals, mostly men but allegedly also some children, have reportedly been subjected to these violations, but the precise figures are impossible to verify given the secretive nature of the abductions and killings. Some of these individuals are released or handed to the police to be prosecuted before the courts. However, many are recovered dead, the bodies often bearing bullet wounds and what appear to be torture marks. Relatives and Baloch groups accuse Pakistani security forces, particularly the paramilitary Frontier Corps and Rangers and intelligence services, of perpetrating these violations. In December 2013 the Chief Minister of Balochistan province Dr Abdul Malik Baloch acknowledged that state "agencies" were responsible for "illegal confinement" of Baloch activists. His comments echoed statements by the then Chief Justice of the Pakistan Supreme Court earlier in 2013 during hearings of 'habeas corpus' cases that included instances of alleged enforced disappearances.

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.