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First UA: 46/24 Index: ASA 33/8072/2024 Pakistan of May 23, 2024

PAKISTAN

CALL FOR THE RELEASE OF ABDUCTED JOURNALIST AND POET

On 15 May 2024, Ahmad Farhad, a Kashmiri journalist and poet, was forcibly taken from his home in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital. His whereabouts remain unknown. Initially, the police refused to file a First Information Report (FIR). However, they later filed one following orders from the Islamabad High Court.

The authorities must immediately disclose Ahmad's location and ensure his release. They must also conduct an effective, prompt, thorough, independent, and impartial investigation into the circumstances of his enforced disappearance.

Write to the Minister of Interior urging the ministry to:

- Ensure the immediate release of Ahmad Farhad
- Conduct an effective, prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into his fate and whereabouts.
- Guarantee that anyone suspected of criminal responsibility for their involvement in Ahmad's enforced disappearance is tried before civilian courts through principles of fair trial without recourse to the death penalty.

Write to:

Mr. Mohsin Naqvi, Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior, R Block, Pak Secretariat
Islamabad
Pakistan
Email: secretary@interior.gov.pk

Salutation: Dear Minister Mohsin Naqvi,

And copy:

His Excellency Zaheer Aslam Janjua
High Commissioner
High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
10 Range Road
Ottawa, ON K1N 8J3
Tel: (613) 238-7881, -7882, -7883 Fax: (613) 238-7296
Email: pahicottawa@mofa.gov.pk

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmad Farhad, a 38-year-old Pakistani journalist of Kashmiri origin, was abducted at 1 am on May 15, 2024, while returning to his home in Islamabad. Four men took him away in an unknown vehicle, witnessed by his family. They also broke the CCTV cameras and took the digital video recorder (DVR)

from the house. Ahmad's family went to the police station at 4 am, but the police refused to file a First Information Report (FIR) or investigate the case. The family then filed a habeas corpus petition at the Islamabad High Court. Following the court's order, the police began investigating and must report their progress to the court.

On May 17, Ahmad's wife received a call from his alleged abductors, demanding she withdraw her petition to secure his return. Despite withdrawing the application, Ahmad was not released. His wife has decided to continue her case.

Ahmad Farhad has 15 years of experience as a journalist, working for major Pakistani TV news channels like Bol News, Hum News, Neo News, and Capital TV. He is also a renowned Urdu poet, known for addressing political themes such as enforced disappearances in his poetry. Ahmad is active on social media, criticizing political interference by the armed forces in Pakistan. Due to his outspoken views, he has faced threats and job terminations under state pressure. He has been under surveillance for the past two years, and his laptop was confiscated by authorities last year. Two months ago, his family in Kashmir was threatened by the police, demanding he delete his social media posts against state authorities.

Ahmad has four children, the youngest being four years old. His wife has described the uncertainty about his whereabouts as extremely distressing for the family.

In Pakistan, enforced disappearances are used to silence journalists, human rights defenders, dissenters, and minority groups, especially in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There is no law criminalizing enforced disappearances, and state accountability is lacking. Families of the disappeared face harassment, surveillance, and intimidation for demanding justice. Enforced disappearances violate the right to liberty, fair trial, and freedom from torture and other cruel treatments. Pakistan has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention against Torture.

Ahmad's disappearance coincides with mass protests in the Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir region. Organized by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), the protests demand economic rights, lower electricity tariffs, wheat subsidies, and increased taxes on high-income groups. The state responded with tear gas and lethal ammunition, resulting in three deaths and nearly a hundred injuries since May 11, 2024. A mobile internet blackout was also imposed in the region.

Please take action as soon as possible until July 15, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.