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First UA: 58/24 Index: ASA 33/8255/2024 Pakistan of July 3, 2024

MEXICO

DISAPPEARANCES OF FAMILY MEMBERS OF POLITICIANS

In June 2024, three relatives of political workers from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were forcibly disappeared. On June 6, Professors Mazhar-ul-Hassan and Zahoor-ul-Hassan, brothers of PTI member Azhar Mashwani, were disappeared. Just three days later, on June 9, Ghulam Shabbir, brother of Shahbaz Gill, also disappeared. Despite their families' desperate efforts to locate them, including approaching the police and the court, their whereabouts remain unknown.

These enforced disappearances appear to be part of a disturbing pattern aimed at intimidating critics of the Pakistani government and military, even those living abroad. The government of Pakistan must immediately disclose the whereabouts of these individuals and ensure an effective, independent, and impartial investigation into these disappearances.

Write to the Pakistani Minister of Interior urging him to:

- Reveal the whereabouts of the three disappeared individuals and ensure their immediate and safe return.
- Conduct an effective, independent, and impartial investigation into these disappearances, bringing all those responsible to justice in fair trials before an ordinary civilian court.
- End the practice of enforced disappearance.
- Disclose the fate and whereabouts of all forcibly disappeared people.
- Accede promptly to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance without reservations and recognize the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of victims and other states parties.

Write to:

Mr. Mohsin Naqvi, Minister of Interior

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

On June 6, 2024, armed men abducted Mazhar-ul-Hassan and Zahoor-ul-Hassan, brothers of PTI member Azhar Mashwani, from their home in Lahore. The intruders included plain-clothed men and officials in Counter Terrorism Department uniforms. Since then, their whereabouts remain unknown, and their family has had no contact with them. Despite multiple court directives, the police have not presented them in court after a habeas corpus petition was filed at the Lahore High Court.

Ghulam Shabbir, brother of former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Shahbaz Gill, was abducted around 11:45 pm on June 8, 2024. He vanished after leaving his Lahore residence to travel to Islamabad. Earlier that evening, police raided his family's ancestral home in Faisalabad. His whereabouts have been unknown since the abduction.

This is not the first time Azhar Mashwani's family has faced targeting. Zahoor-ul-Hassan was previously abducted on May 10, 2023, during a crackdown on PTI following nationwide protests. He was held for five months and subjected to mental and physical torture. Their father, Qazi Habib ur Rehman, and Azhar Mashwani himself were also abducted and released after short detentions.

Mazhar-ul-Hassan, a professor at Punjab College for 13 years, is the sole breadwinner for his family, which includes two young sons. He suffers from health issues requiring careful management. Zahoor-ul-Hassan, a computer science professor and department head, has four children and has been unable to return to work due to the trauma from his previous abduction. Ghulam Shabbir, a businessman with no political affiliations, has two sons. His brother Shahbaz Gill remains an active PTI member and has faced arrest and charges for sedition.

Azhar Mashwani and Shahbaz Gill are currently outside Pakistan, believing their families are targeted for their PTI support. The state's crackdown on PTI intensified after the 9 May 2023 protests, resulting in over 4,000 arrests. Many PTI leaders were detained and forced to resign. Severe restrictions on PTI's freedom of expression and assembly were evident during the February 8, 2024, General Election. The social media platform X (formerly Twitter) has been banned in Pakistan since February 17, 2024, to curb election-related allegations.

Please take action as soon as possible until October 31, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.