

Baroness Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Common Foreign and Security
Vice President of the European Commission

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

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Ref: B 1578

EU MUST RESPOND TO HARASSMENT AND ABUSE OF JOURNALISTS IN PAKISTAN

Dear Baroness Ashton,

Amnesty International is writing to you to raise serious concerns about the harassment and abuse of journalists in Pakistan that continue in a general climate of impunity.

Amnesty International's recently released report ["A Bullet Has Been Chosen For You": Attacks on Journalists in Pakistan](#) is based on extensive field research carried out in Pakistan between 2011 and 2014, including interviews with over 100 journalists and media workers and their relatives. Amnesty International also spoke to representatives of Pakistan state institutions and groups, including some of those implicated in the abuses documented for this report.

Pakistan is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists, judging by the severity and extent of threats and attacks made to media professionals due to their reporting. According to Amnesty International's research, at least 34 journalists have been killed as a likely consequence of their work since March 2008, including the murders of eight journalists since the present government came to power in June 2013.

Journalists and media workers from across Pakistan told Amnesty International their experiences of harassment, abduction, torture and attempts on their lives by state intelligence officers, members of political parties and armed groups like the Taliban. Journalists reporting on national security and human rights, and those reporting from the conflict-affected northwest, violence-ravaged Balochistan and the city of Karachi are most exposed to the risk of abuse as they rarely receive protection from the state or support from their employers.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the failure of the successive governments to carry out prompt, impartial, independent and thorough investigations into abuses against journalists, or to bring those responsible to justice. The cases of Hamid Mir, Raza Rumi and Saleem Shahzad clearly demonstrate the lack of justice for attacks on journalists. As far as Amnesty International is aware, no one has been brought to justice for any of these attacks.

This climate of impunity allows attacks against journalists to continue unabated and effectively sends a signal that any individual or group with the means and intent can literally get away with murder. As far as Amnesty International is aware, there have only been two instances where killings of journalists have resulted in perpetrators being convicted in Pakistan.

Attacks on journalists have a chilling effect on freedom of expression in Pakistan, and increasingly result in self-censorship by journalists. As part of a free and independent press, journalists play a vital role in promoting the right to freedom of expression, guaranteed by Article 19 of the ICCPR to which Pakistan is a state party. Ensuring that journalists are able to undertake their activity free from harassment and attack is also an essential cornerstone for the promotion of human rights in Pakistan.

The European Union (EU) and its member states must urgently act to this end, in line with EU commitments to place human rights at the centre of all external action and making use of the multiple EU human rights guidelines. In addition, Pakistan remains bound at international level as well as under its GSP+ status not only to ratify core international human rights instruments but also to implement them effectively. Amnesty International therefore calls on the EU and its member states to:

- Publicly and consistently condemn all attacks on journalists in Pakistan
- Provide all support necessary to the Pakistan government to address these human rights concerns and ensure that journalists can freely and safely undertake their vital activities in Pakistan
- Use all opportunities, including the forthcoming visit of the EU Special Representative on Human Rights to Pakistan, to raise these concerns with the Pakistan government and call on it to:
 - Ensure prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all human rights abuses against journalists, including abductions, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment, extrajudicial executions and unlawful killings
 - Initiate investigations into the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence and all other state institutions and officials implicated in human rights abuses against journalists, particularly ensuring that superior officers are held accountable for violations ordered by them, or abuses committed due to their inaction
 - Implement the Prime Minister's announced plan to establish an office of public prosecutor at the federal and provincial levels tasked with investigating attacks against journalists, and ensure that it is independent, adequately staffed and resourced, and has authority to investigate the military and intelligence services
 - Ensure that all persons suspected of killing and other human rights abuses against journalists are brought to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty, regardless of their status, rank or affiliation with state or non-state groups

We welcome further discussion of these issues and stand ready to provide any further information you may require.

Yours sincerely,



Ivona McGowan
Director of Programmes

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Oliver Rentschler, Deputy Head of Cabinet, HRVP
Suvi Seppäläinen, Member of Cabinet, HRVP
Stavros Lambrinidis, EU Special Representative on Human Rights
Moya Michaela Wright, Pakistan Desk Officer, EEAS
Lars-Gunnar Wigemark, Head of EU Delegation, Pakistan