

PUBLIC

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11 June 2007

UA 144/07 **Fear for Safety**

PAKISTAN **Iqbal Kazmi (m), journalist**

Journalist Iqbal Kazmi was abducted by unidentified men on 6 June at around 5.30am after dropping off his 12-year-old son at his wife's mother's house in the Gulistan-e-Jauhar area of Karachi. He was reportedly tortured, and later drugged on the evening of 7 June. He regained consciousness the following day in a park in the Clifton area of Karachi. The men who abducted him threatened to kill him and his family unless they leave Karachi by 13 June.

Kazmi was reportedly blindfolded, tied up, severely beaten, stripped naked and tortured throughout the night of 6 June: this included being burnt with cigarette butts on his chest, back and genitals. The next day his kidnappers interrogated him about his links to Member of Parliament Imran Khan, leader of the *Tehreek-e-Insaf* (Movement for Justice) party and prominent critic of the national and provincial government, and to the intelligence agencies. He said he had no links at all with Imran Khan or any intelligence agency. He was also asked to withdraw a petition he had filed against the leader of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Altaf Hussein, blaming him for instigating riots that took place in Karachi on 12 May after President Musharaff dismissed the Chief Justice of Pakistan. He was then shown a picture of his wife and children and threatened with death if he did not agree to withdraw the petition and sign a six-page document agreeing to withdraw these demands. He later told reporters that he had signed the document under duress after being threatened with more violence.

As well as MQM leader Altaf Hussein, Kazmi's petitions had accused the Sindh chief minister, Arbab Rahim, of responsibility for the riots, which left at least 41 people dead.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death threats levelled against Iqbal Kazmi follow a prolonged history of violent attacks on journalists in Pakistan, and a recent clampdown on freedom of expression in the country.

For many years journalists and other media workers have faced threats, arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, ill-treatment, torture and sometimes death at the hands of the intelligence services, the military and opposition groups. For example in December 2005 journalist Hayatullah Khan was abducted by five armed men, allegedly members of the security forces; he was found dead six months later. Publication of his photographs had proved that, contrary to government claims, the US military had fired a missile in Pakistan territory of North Warizistan (see follow-up to UA 308/05, 20 June 2006, ASA 33/030/2005). In April 2006, the director of TV station Baloch Voice, Munir Mengal, was arrested by intelligence agents and remains in military custody (see UA 92/06, 13 April 2006, ASA 33/011/2006). Mehruddin Mari, a correspondent for the Sindhi-language newspaper the *Daily Kawdish*, was beaten and subjected to electric shocks by military officials in order to force him to confess to links with the Baloch nationalist movement during his four-month detention, July-October 2006.

During 2007 fears of further attacks on journalists increased as political tensions intensified following the suspension of Pakistan's Chief Justice by the government in March. As public protests in support of the Chief Justice gathered pace nationwide, the offices of Geo TV were raided by police for ignoring a government order not to air popular news programme. During riots related to the judicial crisis in Karachi in May, several journalists were prevented from carrying out their professional duties by pro-government activists, allegedly including MQM members, who beat them and damaged their equipment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Urdu, Pashtu or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of journalist Iqbal Kazmi who was abducted on 6 June and reportedly tortured and who, with his family, remains under threat of death;
- urging the authorities to take all appropriate measures to protect him and his family;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the abduction and torture on Iqbal Kazmi and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to do everything necessary to protect journalists from threats, harassment and attack, and guarantee their freedom of movement;
- calling on the authorities to uphold journalists' rights to freedom of opinion and expression as well as their personal security, as guaranteed by Articles 3 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

APPEALS TO:

President Pervez Musharaff
Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: +92 51 9221422

E-mail: CE@pak.gov.pk
president@pak.gov.pk

Salutation: Dear President Musharaff

Mr Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao
Minister for the Interior
Ministry for the Interior
Room 404, 4th Floor
Block R, Federal Secretariat,
Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: +92-51 9202624

E-mail: minister@interior.gov.pk
secretary@interior.gov

Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Justice Rhana Bhagwandas
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of Pakistan
Constitution Avenue, Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: +92 51 9213452

E-mail: scp2000@isb.paknet.com.pk

Salutation: Dear Chief Justice

Mr Muhammad Wasi Zafar
Minister of Law, Justice and Human Rights
Room 305, S-Block, Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: +92 51 9202628

E-Mail: minister@molaw.gov.pk

Salutation: Dear Minister

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 July 2007.