

## *Human Rights Defenders Alert - India*

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**Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,**

**Ms. Margaret Sekaggya**

C/o The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - Palais Wilson

United Nations Office at Geneva

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Dear Ma'am,

***Sub: HRD Alert-India - Urgent Appeal for Action – Pakistan: Death threats to Asma Jahangir, Former UN Special Rapporteur and noted Human Rights Defender – Reg***

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a Forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders.

It endeavours to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns.

We are now writing to express our grave concern over the serious threat to the life of the Pakistan's leading human rights activist and one of the most influential leaders of the bar there, Ms. Asma Jahangir via an information-leak from a responsible and highly credible source to her which has by now been reported widely in the media. In an interview telecast on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June Ms. Jahangir alleged that Pakistani military and intelligence agencies have plotted to kill her.

**Name of the Alleged Perpetrators:** Pakistani Military and Intelligence Agencies

**Place of incident:** Pakistan

**Date of incident:** NA – Disclosed on 4<sup>th</sup> of June, 2012

**About the Human Rights Defender:**

*Ms. Asma Jahangir is a lawyer and a leading, world renowned human rights activist of Pakistan. In 2010, Ms. Jahangir became the first woman to lead the Supreme Court Bar Association, Pakistan's most influential forum for lawyers. She was also the chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, a non-governmental rights-based*

*organization. From 1998 to 2004, Ms. Jahangir served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions. From 2004 until mid-2010, she was the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.*

**Case Narrative:**

In an interview to Media in Pakistan, Ms. Jahangir on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2012, she said that she had discovered through a “security leak” brought to her attention by a “highly credible” source that an assassination attempt was being planned against her from “the highest levels of the security establishment.” She said that she believed it was best to go public with the information because she feared that she might be killed and a member of her family framed for the murder.

Ms. Jahangir has locked horns with the Pakistani military on many occasions in the past few months. Last November (2011), Husain Haqqani, Pakistan’s ambassador to the United States, was forced by the Pakistani military to resign his position after allegations that he was responsible for a secret memo delivered to senior US military officials seeking support for Pakistani civilian control of national security policy. As defense lawyer in the “Memogate” affair, Jahangir raised serious reservations about lack of due process in legal proceedings against Haqqani and threats to his life from the military Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). She has also been a critic of the military’s policies in the insurgency-hit province of Balochistan, where it is accused of widespread killings, enforced disappearances, and torture.

**Additional Information:**

All through her career, Asma Jahangir has frequently been the target of harassment and threats. In 2007, when Gen. Pervez Musharraf was President, or rather the Military Ruler of Pakistan, she was placed under house arrest after imposing emergency rule. She played a prominent role in the “lawyers’ movement” in Pakistan, which led to Musharraf’s ouster and to the restoration to office of Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

During her campaign for the Supreme Court Bar Association, Jahangir repeatedly received threats for raising issues such as corruption in the legal arena. Extremist groups and allied Pakistani media ran a campaign accusing Jahangir of apostasy – a capital offence in Pakistan – and urging lawyers not to vote for her.

The death threats that Ms. Jahangir has reportedly received should be seen in the light of the past instances of high-profile killings in which the involvement of the military and its intelligence agencies is well-documented. In April 2010, a three-member UN inquiry commission into the December 2007 assassination of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto concluded that Pakistani authorities failed to provide Bhutto adequate security and elements within the military may have played a role in her assassination. The panel was highly critical of the “pervasive role” played by the ISI in the events leading up to the assassination. In May 2011, Saleem Shahzad, a reporter for the Hong Kong-based Asia Times Online and the Italian news agency Adnkronos International, was tortured and killed after receiving repeated and direct threats from the ISI.

### **Appeal**

We, therefore, urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that the authorities in Pakistan

- Carry out an immediate and thorough investigation into the death threats that Ms. Asma Jahangir has received and ensure her safety and integrity and that of her family members and also hold all those responsible to account, regardless of position or rank;
- Ensure that Ms. Asma Jahangir is protected from acts of impunity by state and non-state actors and is permitted to continue her human rights work freely and without fear of reprisal;
- Conform to the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, especially:
  - its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”;
  - and its Article 12.2, which states that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto

or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”;

- Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Pakistan.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

***Henri Tiphagne***

Honorary National Working Secretary,

Human Rights Defenders Alert - India