

Pakistan: an Open Letter Demanding the Release of Baloch Missing Persons

Monday 28 April 2014, by [Petition / Sign-on Letter](#) (Date first published: 28 April 2014).

On March 18th, 2014 around 5:00pm in Quetta, Zahid Baloch chairperson of Baloch Student Organization- Azad (BSO-A), was abducted at gun point. Banuk Karima, vice chairperson of BSO-A, witnessed the abduction. She notes, 'Pakistan's secret agencies and security forces abducted Zahid Baloch, I along with three other members of BSO-A witnessed the abduction. We are deeply concerned about his safety and feel that his life is under serious threat. Zahid Baloch is not the only missing Baloch.

According to Voice Of Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP) - an independent advocacy group run by the families of those who are missing - more than 19,000 Baloch persons are missing. Other organisations put the figure in the range of 600 to 5000. Most human rights organizations and activists accuse Pakistani secret agencies and military forces for these abductions. This fact was acknowledged by the Pakistan Supreme Court. Not only are Baloch systematically being disappeared. They are also being tortured and murdered.

The torture and murder of Sangat Sana Baloch and Qambar Chakar are illustrative and not exceptional. Sangat was abducted from Bolan district of Balochistan on 7th of December 2009. He was a political activist demanding rights for the Baloch and had expressed to friends that he had been receiving threats from Pakistani agencies. One afternoon in February 2012 in district Kech, of Balochistan, his bullet riddled body was found. He had been shot twenty seven times in the chest, his arms and legs were broken and a hole had been drilled into his head and skull. Sangat isn't the only Baloch to have suffered torture. Qambar Chakar, a university student, was abducted from his house near Turbat city on November 26th 2010. His body was found on a roadside in the same district from which he was abducted, on 5th of January 2011. His upper body had been ripped apart in two halves by bullets fired continuously at the same spot on one side of his chest. He also had a further 28 bullets in other parts of his body. Abduction, torture and murder of Baloch activist has historically been the Pakistanis states method of answering the Baloch question.

Baloch activists claim that Balochistan was annexed by Pakistan on 27th March 1948 by the Pakistani army on the orders of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The Baloch, since this date, have variously demanded either increased provincial autonomy in a confederal political system or independences. The Pakistani state, has heeded neither demand. Instead, by both civilian led governments and military dictatorship the Baloch have been answered by bullets. Besides the abductions, torture and murder of Baloch activists, the state has carried out major military operations in Balochistan, often in civilian areas. Alarmingly, military forces have also started raiding and destroying educational institutions. In the past four months, study centres and schools have been raided with students and teachers among those who have been abducted. Shockingly, bookshops have been raided and bookshop owners arrested.

Life for students in Balochistan has become unbearable. One such student is Latif Johar.

Latif Johar is a twenty two years old student and a member of BSO-A. He is currently on a hunger strike unto death. The hunger strike started on the April 22nd 2014. He explained his motivations, 'I

am a student. Studying, writing, learning, and exploring are my hobbies. But all this has become impossible for me, thanks to Pakistan. My friends disappear and end up dead dumped on empty street-sides with blood-curdling scars on their bodies. My schools and colleges are turned into cozy military barracks. Uniformed men with guns round the playgrounds where school kids would play not so long ago. Libraries are closed and librarians 'missing'. He goes on, 'I have decided that I shall keep suffering in this hunger strike until the civilized world steps forward and plays a role in recovering my organization's chairman, Zahid Baloch'. Latif is weakening each hour and at the time of writing he had not eaten for over 120 hours.

Zahid Baloch, as noted, was abducted by the Pakistani security agents and has been disappeared.

We, the undersigned, call on the Government of Pakistan to stop all military operations in Balochistan, to stop raids on educational institutions, to stop raids on bookshops, and to stop forced abductions of Baloch activists. We further call for the immediate release of Zahid Baloch and all others held by Pakistani security forces. We call on intellectuals and activists to take note of these atrocities being committed in Balochistan for which we hold the Pakistani state responsible and complicit.

We appeal to all readers, to raise the issue of the atrocities against the Baloch at all political and social forums.

Mir Muhammad Ali Talpur, Baloch Intellectual

Tariq Ali, Writer

Noam Chomsky, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Muhammad Hanif, Journalist

Saadia Toor, CUNY

David Barsamian, Journalist

Huma Dar, UC Berkeley

Magid Shihade, Birzeit University

Asad Farooq, LUMS

Qalandar Bux Memon, FC College

Sarah Suhail, Activist

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