

Pakistan: Sedition cases registered against organisers and participants of student march

Wednesday 4 December 2019, by [Amnesty International](#), [GABOL Imran](#), [Peoples Dispatch](#), [SHAHZAD Muhammad](#) (Date first published: 4 December 2019).

LAHORE: Police have registered cases against the organisers and participants of the recently held Student Solidarity March on sedition charges and arrested Alamgir Wazir, one of the participants.

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The Civil Lines police on behalf of the state registered a case on sedition charges against the march’s organisers, including Ammar Ali Jan, Farooq Tariq, Iqbal Lala (father of Mashal Khan who was lynched over allegation of blasphemy in Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan), Alamgir Wazir (nephew of MNA and Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement leader Ali Wazir), Mohammad Shabbir and Kamil Khan, besides 250-300 unidentified participants.

Interestingly, the action flies in the face of the recent statements by several ministers and government representatives who supported the students.

The students took to the streets in 50 cities of the country to voice their demands, including restoration of student unions.

According to the FIR, complainant Sub-Inspector Mohammad Nawaz said he was on patrol when he received information that a rally of 250-300 people led by Ammar Ali Jan, Farooq Tariq, Iqbal Lala, Alamgir Wazir, Mohammad Shabbir and Kamil Khan was being taken out. He said he had reached Faisal Chowk on The Mall where the protesters were forcibly blocking the road to set up a stage to deliver speeches.

“The speakers incited the students against the state and its institutions and speeches and slogans were recorded on mobile phones and can also be checked through PPIC3 cameras,” he claimed.

Capital City Police Officer Zulfiqar Hameed told Dawn that one of the suspects, Alamgir Wazir, was arrested two days ago in the case. He said the case was registered on behalf of the state because the students were delivering provocative speeches and chanting slogans against the state and its institutions. He said police would arrest the other people involved in the case as well.

Alamgir Wazir, a former Punjab University student who went on to become chairperson of the Pakhtun Council, had gone missing from the campus two days ago. He had completed his BS Gender Studies from the university last year and was there to get his degree. He was staying at hostel No 19 with his cousin Mohammad Riaz.

The Pukhtun Council students protested against the arrest of Alamgir Wazir outside the Punjab University vice chancellor's house. The protesters condemned the arrest and demanded his immediate release. Social media is abuzz with the news of his disappearance and demand for his recovery.

This is not the first case registered against students and activists on sedition charges. In February, an FIR was lodged in Multan where police arrested Progressive Youth Alliance activist Rawal Asad and kept him in jail for a month.

Ammar Ali Jan

@ammaralijan

We have been nominated in an FIR. We met Governor who assured us of support. Ministers tweeted in our support. Protestors gathered & dispersed peacefully.

Do we even have a govt in our country? Can we trust anybody's words?

We are peaceful citizens & will remain undeterred.

View image on Twitter

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10:32 AM - Dec 1, 2019

Ammar Ali Jan tweeted: "We have been nominated in an FIR. We met Governor who assured us of support. Ministers tweeted in our support. Protesters gathered & dispersed peacefully. Do we even have a govt in our country? Can we trust anybody's words? We are peaceful citizens & will remain undeterred."

Talking to Dawn, he said thousands of students were protesting in the country for restoration of student unions and their other rights, but sedition case had been registered against them. The government, he said, was using the colonial-era law to penalise them just as the British would book natives for chanting slogans against their King.

"Are we living in democracy or under any kingship? Its inhuman law in a democracy and it's a message of the state that they can use draconian laws against its people but can't give them their rights," he deplored.

Imran Gabol

• Published in Dawn, December 2nd, 2019:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1519976/sedition-cases-registered-against-organisers-and-participants-of-student-march>

Organizers of Student Solidarity March in Pakistan charged with sedition

Hours after the Student Solidarity March saw thousands hitting streets across 50 locations in Pakistan, nearly 300 unidentified students were charged with sedition by Lahore police.

One of the participants was also arrested on December 1.

The Student Solidarity March was successfully conducted across Pakistan on November 29, to demand the restoration of student unions. Photo: Reuters

Several organizers and participants of the historic Student Solidarity March in Pakistan, which mobilized students unions across the country, have been charged with sedition for allegedly “raising insulting remarks against the state institutes.” According to the Lahore police, charges have been leveled against 300 unidentified students. One of the participants associated with Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement, Alamgir Wazir, was also arrested on December 1. The Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (Pashtun protection movement has been demanding rights for the community in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.)

Wazir, the acting chairperson of the Pakhtun Council, was staying in the hostel of the Punjab University when he was detained. Students associated with the Pakhtun Council have released a statement condemning the charges leveled against him. Demonstrations were also held outside the Punjab University vice-chancellor’s house, demanding his immediate release.

After being detained on Sunday, Wazir was presented in court at the Cantt Kachhery. The police requested permission to keep him in custody for a ten-day period, asserting his involvement in anti-state speech and for violating the sound systems act. The court, however, rejected this request and released him on judicial remand.

In the first information report compiled by the Civil Lines police on behalf of the state, the names of some of the other students charged with sedition have also been mentioned, including Mohammad Shabbir, Kamil Khan, Ammar Ali Jan and Farooq Tariq. Iqbal Lala, father of the Mashal Khan, a 23-year-old student who was lynched over allegation of blasphemy in April 2017, was also charged by the police.

The Student Solidarity March was successfully conducted across Pakistan on November 29, to demand the restoration of student unions in the country, along with the provision of better educational facilities. The government of prime minister Imran Khan responded by making statements to appease the agitating students. Former finance minister Asad Umar even hinted at plans to restore student unions. In fact, the ban on student unions was lifted by the state government of the Sindh province through an announcement on December 2.

On the other hand, the authoritarian response by the police and university administration has led to charges of doublespeak and angered the student community.

“From getting degrees cancelled, to getting abducted from campus, to getting booked under sedition charges, students and academics have faced all in just past one week for marching for Students Unions,” noted prominent human rights activist, Jibran Nasir.

Peoples Dispatch

• Peoples Dispatch, December 04, 2019:

<https://peoplesdispatch.org/2019/12/04/organizers-of-student-solidarity-march-in-pakistan-charged-with-sedition/>

Pakistan: End crackdown on student protests

The Pakistani authorities must immediately end their crackdown on peaceful student protests, Amnesty International said today.

The human rights organization's call came after the Pakistani police have filed criminal charges against activists who have supported the 'Student Solidarity March' and the arbitrary detention of Alamgir Wazir, one of the protestors.

*"The crackdown on the student protests is a brazen violation of their rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of peaceful assembly
Rabia Mehmood"*

"The crackdown on the student protests is a brazen violation of their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. The charges against the organizers must be dropped and anyone detained for their peaceful participation in the protests must be released immediately and unconditionally," said Rabia Mehmood, South Asia Researcher at Amnesty International.

The crackdown comes in the wake of peaceful student solidarity marches across Pakistan, demanding the right to form student unions and calling for an end to the harassment of students among other concerns.

Alamgir Wazir was detained from the Punjab University campus in Lahore on 30 November 2019, and his whereabouts are still not known. He is the nephew of Ali Wazir, a parliamentarian and leader of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement, a non-violent movement calling for an end to enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations against Pakistan's Pashtun ethnic minority.

The other four activists named in the police report – Ammar Ali Jan, Farooq Tariq, Muhammad Shabbir, Kamil Khan, and Iqbal Lala – are at risk of imminent arrest. Ammar Ali Jan, Farooq Tariq, Muhammad Shabbir and Kamil Khan are political activists. Iqbal Lala is the father of the late Mashal Khan, a student who was killed at his university after fellow students falsely accused him of committing blasphemy.

The five activists have been charged with 'sedition', 'maintenance of public order', 'nuisance', and 'continuation nuisance' – draconian clauses in the penal code which trace their origins to British colonial rule. They have also been charged with the violation of the 'Punjab Sound Systems (Regulation) Act' – a non-bailable offence that can be punished by six months imprisonment and/or a fine.

"The draconian laws used against these peaceful protestors have no place in a modern rights-respecting society and should be consigned to a distant past as a relic of Britain's tainted colonial legacy. The Pakistani authorities have an obligation to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly," said Rabia Mehmood.

Background

The Student Solidarity Marches, which took place across Pakistan on 29 November 2019, demanded cuts in student fees, an end to surveillance of students on and off-campus, an end to violence on campus, an end of sexual harassment on campus, the introduction of policies to address complaints of sexual harassment, an end to privatization of academic institutions, and the restoration of student unions in Pakistan.

1 December 2019, 18:30 UTC

• <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/12/pakistan-end-crackdown-on-student-protests/>

‘Sedition’ case lodged against participants of Student Solidarity March

‘Sedition’ case lodged against participants of Student Solidarity March

LAHORE: A case under sedition charges has been registered against Iqbal Lala, father of Mashal Khan, and other participants of the Student Solidarity March, held across the country including Lahore on November 29, for restoration of students unions.

Mashal Khan, a student of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, was lynched by an angry mob over blasphemy allegations in 2017.

Lala, Ammar Ali Jan, Farooq Tariq, Alamgir Wazir, Muhammad Shabbir and Kamil Khan are nominated in the case, registered at the Civil Lines Police Station on the complaint of sub-inspector Muhamamd Nawaz.

According to the first information report (FIR), speakers allegedly incited protesting students against the state and its institutions through ‘hateful’ speeches and slogans. “These have been recorded by mobile-phones and can also be checked through PPIC3 cameras,” the FIR read.

Other sections in FIR included section 290, 291 of PPC, section six of The Punjab Sound System Act and section 16 of Maintenance of Public Order (MPO).

Mashal Khan, since his brutal murder, has become as a symbol of students’ resistance. Sight of his father Iqbal Lala ignited passion in students at Friday’s march. Lala was given a hero’s welcome as he arrived to express solidarity with students in Lahore. He was also caught struggling to keep his emotions in check on seeing so many students raising slogans in his favour.

Meanwhile, Alamgir Wazir, a student of Punjab University and the co-accused in the FIR, was taken into custody by police from the university premises on Saturday afternoon. Wazir is a former chairperson of Pakhtun Council’s Punjab University chapter.

He completed his BS in Gender Studies from the university last year and was visiting it to get the degree verified and was staying at the hostel with his cousin. Wazir had also attended the solidarity march and made a fiery speech.

A large number of students staged a protest sit-in against his arrest at the campus last night. Social media was also abuzz with news of his arrest.

Muhammad Shahzad



- The Express Tribune. Published: December 1, 2019:
<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2109957/1-sedition-case-lodged-participants-student-solidarity-march/>

Pashtun student activist seeks bail in 'sedition' case

LAHORE: Alamgir Wazir - a student activist, who was arrested for his participation in the recently held Student Solidarity March - filed a bail petition at a local court in Lahore on Wednesday.

Wazir, who participated in the march, was detained from the university a day after the event before a case was registered against him.

A day later, it emerged that police had registered cases on sedition charges against the organisers and participants of the Student Solidarity March held on Nov 29.

Haider Kaleem

@HaiderKaleemB

#ReleaseAlamgirWazir: His lawyers weren't sent a notice of today's hearing. Around 25 lawyers appeared from the state's side demanding his physical remand. Luckily his lawyers found out and reached court immediately. @fawadchaudhry @ShireenMazari1 @Mustafa_PPP what's going on?



View image on Twitter

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12:53 - 4 Dec 2019

According to the FIR against Wazir, complainant Sub Inspector Mohammad Nawaz said he was on patrol when he received information that a rally of 250-300 people led by the student leaders was being taken out.

“The speakers incited the students against the state and its institutions and speeches and slogans were recorded on mobile phones and can also be checked through PPIC3 cameras,” he said.

However, in his bail petition submitted on Wednesday, Wazir asserted his innocence and stated that the allegations leveled against him were “false”.

According to the petition, no slogans were shouted against the state and no loudspeaker was found in his possession or on the scene. It added that Wazir was prepared to post bail and to show up for court appearances, should he be granted bail.

The petition also stated, “The procedure laid down by the apex court of the country for recording and use of video evidence has not been followed by the police”. Further, no specific “anti-state” comments were mentioned in the FIR.

Accepting the bail application, the court directed the prosecution and the Punjab police to submit a reply by December 5.

STAFF REPORT

- Pakistan Today:

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/12/04/detained-student-activist-files-for-bail-in-sedition-case/>
