

Statement

“The government of Pakistan is turning a blind eye to the atrocities perpetrated by the religious militant groups”

Tuesday 27 September 2011, by [AHRC](#) (Date first published: 26 September 2011).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AHRC-STM-126-2011

September 26, 2011

A Statement by the Asian Human Rights Commission

PAKISTAN: A mass killer has been provided protection while the families of his victims continue to suffer threats

Malik Ishaq, well known as a killer in many incidents of sectarian violence and bomb blasts has been taken by the state after killing over 100 victims. He is currently being held under house arrest for a period of ten days, supposedly as protective detention. His arrest happened on September 22, 2011 just two days after the killing of 29 persons from the Hazara tribe, the Shia community, in Mastung, Balochistan province and just three days after a sad incident where four more persons from the same tribe were killed by unknown persons as they were going to work.

A banned religious organisation, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) has claimed responsibility for the killings of the Shiaite and Malik heads that organisation. Malik was bailed from the Supreme Court of Pakistan in July from many cases regarding killings and bombings. Malik remained in detention for 14 years but the government could not provided protection to witnesses. Also the prosecution produced very weak cases which ultimately benefitted his defence. Subsequently he was released on bail by the Supreme Court on the grounds of these weak cases. He still faces seven cases and confessed that he planned the attack on the Sri Lankan Cricket Team when he was in jail in March 2009. In the attack seven security personnel were killed.

He was detained on September 22 on the pretext that he was facing death threats and needed protection. His arrest was made under Article 5 of the Maintenance of public order for ten days. The house detention generally does not fall under the term of punishment in the country as during that period the detainee has access to communications via cell phones, internet and the electronic media.

Immediately after his release on bail he visited many places and roused the people on sectarian issues. At the same time he organised his group, the LeJ, which is supposedly banned by the government. However, the LeJ has overtly opened offices in many districts of the Punjab province and is collecting funds on the streets by means of collection boxes in shops and restaurants. After the killing of the 29 Shia pilgrims from the Hazara tribe in Mastung, Balochistan province as they were going in a bus to visit the shrines of religious leaders in Iran, the LeJ has come out openly and announced that it would continue its movement against the Shia sect as they are infidel and they should be declared a non-Islamic religious group.

It is also alleged that banned militant religious groups are exciting violence in Punjab province with full institutional protection from the ruling party of the province. The federal minister on Interior Affairs accused the Punjab provincial government that its ministers and officials are closely associated with the LeJ which is why no action has been taken against the group.

The state's attitude, particularly that of the armed forces, towards the militant religious groups is very soft and sometimes it seems that the militant groups are being protected for the purpose of being used at some suitable time in the future when the state of affairs goes out of the control. The state of Pakistan, which is mainly run by the military, has been using religious militant groups against the liberals and enlightened persons and forces.

In another case, Qadri, the killer of the assassinated governor of Punjab has been given the status of a hero of Islam and is enjoying every facility of life in custody; facilities which he never had in his ordinary life being a head constable in the police. He has access to his network through mobile phones and is being held in a special ward of the jail and allowed to have visitors who meet him regularly. All of this is contrary according to the prison manuals.

The son of the assassinated governor of Punjab, Mr. Shahbaz Taseer, was also abducted by militant groups from Punjab province on August 27 and his whereabouts remain unknown. It is reported that the LeJ is negotiating through the Punjab government for the release of Qadri in exchange for Shahbaz. The negotiations are apparently being carried out under the supervision of the law minister of Punjab province who is notorious for having relationships with the banned militant groups. Therefore all efforts for the release of Shahbaz have been in the interests of the militant organisations.

The state has totally failed to provide protection to the citizens from the religious militant organisations who are surviving on the mercy of Jihadis.

It has been stated before in many forums that the government of Pakistan is turning a blind eye to the atrocities perpetrated by the religious militant groups. There can be no possible justification for the deaths of innocent persons in the name of religion. Religious minorities see no form of protection or redress from the government whose campaign promise was to provide protection for every citizen of the country. However, it is ironic that one of the very people responsible for these atrocities is being protected by the very government that is supposed to be protecting his victims. Malik's protective detention under the guise of house arrest comes after his organisation, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, claimed responsibility for the killings of the Shia pilgrims. One must ask if this is another attempt at appeasement by the government towards the militant religious groups.

The Asian Human Rights Commission urges the government of Pakistan to realise that the international community is closely monitoring the situation and is quite capable of seeing the very blatant discrepancies in the treatment of the victims and the perpetrators. We vehemently condemn the protection provided for a mass murderer while his victims continue to face death threats and religious intolerance. We urge that action be immediately taken against the LeJ and its members. The Minister of Law of Punjab province who is aiding and abetting this organisation must be prosecuted particularly for his connivance with the abductors of Mr. Shahbaz Taseer to obtain the release of a murderer. We also urge the government to ensure the safe release of Mr. Shahbaz Taseer and that suitable compensation and rehabilitation be provided to the victims and families of the Mastung carnage.

#

About AHRC: The Asian Human Rights Commission is a regional non-governmental organisation that

monitors human rights in Asia, documents violations and advocates for justice and institutional reform to ensure the protection and promotion of these rights. The Hong Kong-based group was founded in 1984.

Visit our new website with more features at www.humanrights.asia.