

PRESS RELEASE

Pakistan: Civil society condemns target killing of Parveen Rehman, calls for urgent action by the state to protect citizens

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KARACHI, March 14, 2013: Leading civil society organizations of Pakistan have expressed shock and profound grief at the brutal target killing of Director of the Organi Pilot Project (OPP) Ms. Parveen Rehman by terrorists near her office on Wednesday evening.

In a joint statement here on Thursday, the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, the South Asia Partnership - Pakistan, Strengthening Participatory Organisation, Sungi Development Foundation, the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, and Pakistan Peace Coalition, condemned the target killing of the social activist who dedicated her entire life to the cause of the empowerment of the marginalized communities in the slum areas of Pakistan, particularly the Orangi Town which is one of the largest slums of Asia. After the demise of the OPP's founder head Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan in 1999, Ms. Rehman steered the mission of the organization, expanding one of the world's largest and pioneer low cost sanitation and basic services programmes that went on to change the lives of the downtrodden rural population.

Paying tribute to Ms. Rehman, the statement observed that she was a relentless social activist who was highly respected for her innovative work for the slum communities which went beyond merely facilitating low cost services. She sought to empower the unattended-by-the state community through education, skills-development and provision for microfinance facilities. It was this work of hers that was targeted by the powerful mafias as a threat to their existence. While police have yet to identify her murderers, her brutal killing in the middle of a crowded road in Karachi is an indication of the backing of powerful forces behind her murder. It has been reported in the press that she had been receiving threats from local mafias for a long time. Her murder is a symbol of state's failure to protect its citizens.

The civil society organisations strongly demanded the government to order a judicial inquiry into the killing of Ms. Rehman to ascertain the killers and their actual masters. The state must stand up to protect sane voices and peaceful forces of the country that remain target of the brutality of the non-state actors and the apathy of the state. Parveen Rehman's killing is a serious move to demoralize the forces of peace and development in the country. The organizations expressed the resolve that they will not bow under pressure, but the state must take its responsibility to protect its citizens.

The civil society also expressed solidarity with the OPP team headed by late Parveen Rehman. They resolved to work together to carry forward her mission to empower the marginalized stressing that no terrorists and mafias should have the power to stop peace and development in the society.

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