

# URGENT ACTION

## PROFESSOR FACING PRISON ON TRUMPED UP CHARGES

Professor Muhammad Ismail, a prisoner of conscience charged with “hate speech’ and “cyber terrorism”, was denied bail on 4 November. If convicted, he will face up to seven years in prison. A vocal critic of the country’s armed forces and their treatment of his daughter, woman human rights defender Gulalai Ismail, he is also facing trumped up charges under Pakistan’s draconian anti-terror laws. The Ismail family has endured invasive surveillance, threats and intimidation since May 2019 – with their home raided multiple times. Detained solely for peacefully exercising his human right to freedom of expression, Professor Ismail must be immediately and unconditionally released.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi  
Foreign Office  
Constitution Avenue, Islamabad  
Pakistan  
+92 51-9210335  
[fm@mofa.gov.pk](mailto:fm@mofa.gov.pk)  
Fax: +92 51-9207600

Your Excellency Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi

I write to you out of extreme concern for the life and safety of **Professor Muhammad Ismail**, a 64-year-old teacher and human rights defender. The father of Gulalai Ismail, his family have been the subject of an intense surveillance and harassment campaign, designed to intimidate them into silence and create a sense of fear among Pakistan’s already threatened human rights community.

Professor Ismail’s abduction and trumped up charges under Pakistan’s draconian Anti-Terrorism Act and Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act put him at risk of a lengthy prison sentence which, considering his age, will further endanger his health. He must not be punished for his political expression and for defending his daughter – who was also forced to flee her home country.

**We call upon your government to immediately and unconditionally drop all charges against Professor Ismail, an Amnesty International Prisoner of Conscience, and order his release without delay, and put a stop to the invasive surveillance of him and his family.**

Yours sincerely

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Gulalai Ismail, the daughter of Professor Muhammad Ismail, is a well-known human rights defender, recognized for her women's rights advocacy. She is the 2017 winner of Anna Politkovskaya award and the chair of Aware Girls. Gulalai is also an outspoken supporter of Pakistan's Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement, a peaceful movement that campaigns against extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances and other human rights violations suffered by Pakistan's Pashtun population.

Gulalai Ismail was charged with "sedition", "terrorism" and "defamation" for a speech made at a protest on 22 May 2019 after which she was forced into hiding on 23 May 2019. As a result, her family home was raided multiple times, and men in plain clothes from the country's security agencies confiscated their devices. The Ismail family has remained under constant and invasive surveillance for months.

The threats and intimidation tactics intensified after Gulalai applied for political asylum in the USA. Professor Muhammad Ismail had a First Investigative Report (FIR) registered against him, along with his wife and daughter, on 12 July 2019, accusing them of taking funding from "foreign countries", aiding "terrorist organizations" and working for them under the guise of their social work.

While on bail before arrest in this case, Professor Ismail petitioned the Peshawar High Court to quash this charge. On 24 October, when he was due to appear for the hearing of this petition, that he was abducted by unidentified men outside the court. His family was only informed of his whereabouts later that night by local civil society activists that he was in custody of the Cyber Crime Wing of the Federal Investigation Agency in Peshawar. The official confirmation of his arrest only came on 25 October, when he was produced at a special court of Peshawar and charged with hate speech and spreading "fake information" against the government's institutions under the draconian Pakistan's Electronic Crimes Act for statuses he has uploaded on his personal social media pages.

Professor Ismail is suffering from multiple health problems and his detention will likely exacerbate them.

Freedom of expression, assembly and association have come under attack in Pakistan in recent years. Human rights defenders and journalists face restrictions in both online and offline spaces. The clampdown on civic space has intensified in 2019, through draconian laws that enable violations of human rights.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** [English]

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 17 December 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** [Professor Muhammad Ismail – He/Him]