

URGENT ACTION

YOUTUBER AND TV ANCHOR FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED IN PAKISTAN

On 11 May 2023, Imran Riaz Khan, a Pakistani YouTuber and TV anchor, was detained and arrested by the Sialkot police, at the Sialkot International Airport. It was only after his detention that a detention order was issued alleging Imran incited violence. Authorities allege he was released on 12 May however he has not been seen or heard from since the day he was arrested. Authorities must immediately and impartially investigate the fate and whereabouts of Imran Riaz Khan, and if he is in state custody, he must be immediately released or, if there is sufficient evidence of wrongdoing, promptly charged with an internationally recognizable crime and brought before a civilian court.

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

Honourable Rana Sanaullah Khan
Minister of Interior,
R-Block Pak Secretariat,
Constitution Ave, Islamabad, Pakistan
Fax: +92 -51-9212026
Email: secretary@interior.gov.pk

Dear Honourable Rana Sanaullah Khan,

I write to you out of extreme concern about the fate and whereabouts of Imran Riaz Khan, a Pakistani YouTuber and TV anchor who has been forcibly disappeared. Imran was arrested and detained in Sialkot on 11 May 2023. Imran was detained at the Sialkot International Airport by the Sialkot police and taken to the Sialkot Cantt police station at around midnight on 11 May 2023. Only subsequently was a detention order issued claiming that Imran was inciting violence in the village of Dhana Wali, a claim his lawyer vehemently denies.

Authorities claim that Imran was released on 12 May at 11.20pm however his family say they have not seen or heard from Imran since his arrest. Imran has been missing for over one month now in a suspected case of enforced disappearance by state authorities and his fate and whereabouts remain unknown. The police claim that Imran is no longer in their custody and it is distressing that the police have not been able to locate Imran despite court orders requiring the authorities to work together to ascertain his whereabouts.

In keeping with government's international human rights obligations, I urge you to:

- **Ensure a prompt, and impartial, investigation into the fate and whereabouts of Imran Riaz Khan;**
- **Should Imran Riaz Khan be in state custody, immediately release him, or if there is sufficient evidence of wrongdoing, promptly charge him with an internationally recognizable crime and produce him before a civilian court;**
- **End the practice of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions;**
- **Immediately and unconditionally disclose the fate and/or whereabouts of forcibly disappeared people to their families;**
- **Immediately release forcibly disappeared people or promptly bring them before a judge in a civilian court of law to rule on the lawfulness of their arrest or detention and whether they should be released.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Imran Riaz Khan is a Pakistani YouTuber and TV anchor who was attempting to leave the country due to fears of victimization on 11 May 2023, when he was detained at the Sialkot International Airport. According to Imran's lawyer, there were no pending cases against him at the time of his arrest, and his family were not informed of his arrest. Imran's lawyer told Amnesty International that Imran was later taken to the Sialkot Cantt police station at around midnight on 11 May 2023. At 10am on 12 May 2023, a detention order was issued, which according to his lawyer, alleged Imran was inciting violence in the village of Dhana Wali, a village in Sialkot. Imran's lawyers claim these allegations are false.

On 12 May, Imran's family filed a petition before the Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court, where the Inspector General of Prisons and Inspector General of Police were ordered to release Imran Riaz Khan by 6pm that day. However, the Inspector General of Prisons informed the court that Imran had already been released. At a subsequent court date, on 22 May, the Inspector General of Police confirmed that he was not in police custody.

Media reports state that the court requested CCTV footage of Imran's arrival and release from jail. According to Imran's lawyer, the CCTV footage that was produced before the court had no time stamp, but the police verbally confirmed that Imran was released on 12 May at 11.20pm.

Imran's lawyer alleges that Imran has been disappeared due to his criticism of the current government and the military. According to media reports, Imran was closely connected to former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who was ousted from power on 9 April 2022 after a vote of no confidence in Parliament. Media reports state that prior to April 2022, Imran Riaz Khan was a supporter of the military and at times justified enforced disappearances and attacks on freedom of expression.

Enforced disappearances have long been used as a tool by the Pakistani authorities to target critics, dissenting voices, minority groups, journalists and human rights defenders. Families are left searching for answers and justice with little to no information about the date and whereabouts of their loved ones. Enforced disappearances put victims outside the protection of the law and put them at risk of torture, other ill-treatment or even death. An enforced disappearance is a violation of the right to security and dignity, the right to life and the right to not be subjected to torture or other cruel or degrading treatment. It contravenes the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Pakistan is a signatory and thus under an obligation to refrain, in good faith, from acts that would defeat its object and purpose.

The enforced disappearance of Imran Riaz Khan comes after the arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and the subsequent violent protests against his arrest in May. Following the violent protests, the government has taken a number of steps in contravention of their obligations under international human rights law, including trying civilians in military courts, mass and arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions and enforced disappearances. On 23 October 2022, Arshad Sharif, a journalist and supporter of Imran Khan was killed in Kenya, in what a Pakistani investigative committee referred to as a "planned assassination". In the recent weeks, a journalist and lawyer were abducted and released after a day. Zubair Anjum, an executive producer for Geo News was abducted from his home in Karachi on 6 June 2023, and returned on 7 June. Similarly, human rights lawyer Jibran Nasir was abducted from near his residence on 1 June 2023. Jibran tweeted that he had returned home on 2 June, a day after his abduction.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 8 July 2023

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Imran Riaz Khan (he/him)