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The European Union must work towards more human rights in Pakistan!

Dear Ms. Kaminara,

It was with great concern that I learned of the precarious human rights situation in Pakistan through the human rights organization Amnesty International.

On 16 June 2020 - seven months after his disappearance - the Pakistani authorities admitted to having the human rights activist Muhammad Idris Khattak in custody. However, his whereabouts remain unknown. He has not been given access to his family or legal counsel, although he faces a long prison sentence or even the death penalty. He is accused of violating the 1923 Official Secrets Act (OSA).

On November 25, 2019, the father of human rights activist and women's rights activist Gulalai Ismail, Professor Muhammad Ismail, was released on bail. He had been accused of "hate speech" and "cyberterrorism". These fabricated charges still stand. Professor Ismail is a outspoken critic of the Pakistani armed forces and their treatment of his daughter, who was forced to flee Pakistan in September 2019.

In September 2019, local media in the Balochistan region of Pakistan reported that medical student Hani Gul was abducted with her fiancé by Pakistani forces, held for three months in an unknown location without charge and tortured several times during this period. Her fiancé, Mohammad Naseem, remains disappeared to this day.

I am appalled by these serious violations of human rights. In recent years, freedom of expression and the rights of assembly and association in Pakistan have come under constant fire. Disappearances are an instrument of repression, directed not only against individuals and families, but also against entire population groups. It is a crime under international law. The use of torture is absolutely and always prohibited in the very first human rights protection treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Civil Pact and the European Convention on Human Rights, because torture violates human dignity.

Pakistan will be a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council until the end of 2020. With membership comes a special responsibility to uphold human rights. I hereby ask you to take this opportunity, in your capacity as Head of the European Union Delegation in Pakistan, to urge Pakistan to ensure better protection of human rights and to put an immediate end to the serious violations of human rights. Please underline that respect for human rights is a condition of any cooperation between the European Union and Pakistan.

Yours sincerely