

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST AND POET FACES CHARGES AFTER ABDUCTION

On May 15, 2024, Ahmad Farhad, a Kashmiri journalist and poet, outspoken critic of enforced disappearances and known for his support for social movements, was forcibly disappeared from his home in the capital city of Pakistan, Islamabad. Two weeks later, on May 29, 2024, Ahmad resurfaced in the custody of police in Pakistan administered Jammu and Kashmir. A criminal case was filed against him for “obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions” at a check post in Kohala, near Muzaffarabad. Subsequently, he was implicated in another case on charges related to terrorism and unlawful assembly. Ahmad was released on bail on June 14; however, the charges against him remain and the investigations into these allegations are ongoing.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Second Urgent Action 46.24**. It’s important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq,
Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir
Prime Minister Secretariat,
Muzaffarabad
Pakistan, 13100
Phone: +92 58229 21314
Email: contact@ajkpm.gok.pk

Pakistani Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Masood Khan
3517 International Court, NW, Washington DC 20008
Phone: (202) 243-6500
Email: consularsection@embassyofpakistanusa.org

Dear Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq, or Dear Ambassador,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the charges against Pakistani journalist and poet, **Ahmad Farhad**, and his previous enforced disappearance from his home in Islamabad on May 15, 2024. Despite a First Information Report (FIR) regarding his disappearance being filed on orders of the Islamabad High Court, his whereabouts remained unknown until May 29 when he resurfaced in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, at a check post in Kohala, near Muzaffarabad.

While I appreciate the government’s efforts to recover Ahmad, I remain deeply concerned about the trumped-up charges filed against him and the ongoing investigations under the Azad Kashmir Penal Code and AntiTerrorism Act. Ahmad has long endured various forms of intimidation from state authorities and is now being targeted for his social media activities. Furthermore, no investigation into Ahmad’s enforced disappearance has been opened.

Therefore, I urge your government to drop all criminal proceedings against, and end the harassment and intimidation of, Ahmad Farhad for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmad Farhad is a 38-year-old Pakistani journalist of Kashmiri origin who was abducted from his home in Islamabad at 1 am on May 15, 2024 by four men. The family filed a habeas corpus petition at the Islamabad High Court to produce him in court and the police subsequently started the investigation on the orders of the Court. The High Court has ordered the police to report its progress in the investigation to the court. On May 17, Ahmad's wife received a call allegedly from his unidentified abductors to withdraw her petition at the High Court to secure Ahmad's return. He was not released after an application to withdraw was filed by her lawyers the next day.

Ahmad resurfaced on May 29 at a check post in Kohala, near Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He was taken into custody and an FIR was filed against him at Dhirkot Police Station under section 186 of the Azad Kashmir Penal Code (APC) for "obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions". He applied for bail before Sessions Judge, Muzaffarabad on May 30, 2024 but was denied bail on June 4, 2024.

Meanwhile, he was charged in an FIR filed at Bishmo Division Police Station Sadar, Muzaffarabad dated May 13, 2024. The FIR was filed against "unknown persons" in connection with the Kashmir Long March organized by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) demanding economic rights, reduced electricity tariffs, wheat subsidies, and increased taxation for high income groups, in which 4 people were killed, among them a police official. Ahmad was not present at the protests; however, he was reporting on them from Islamabad and allegedly posting about them on social media.

Ahmad was granted bail on June 14, 2024, but the charges against him remain.

Ahmad is a journalist with 15 years of experience and has worked for over 10 mainstream Pakistani TV news channels. He is also a renowned Urdu poet, who has raised political themes such as enforced disappearances in his poetry. He has been an outspoken critic of political interference by the armed forces in Pakistan and has faced threats in the past due to his dissent. He was currently working as a freelance journalist after repeatedly being let go by previous employers due to pressure from state authorities. Ahmad had been under surveillance for the last two years, and his laptop was confiscated last year by the authorities. Ahmad has four children, the youngest among them is four years old. His health deteriorated while he was disappeared. He visibly lost a lot of weight.

Enforced disappearances have been [used in Pakistan](#) to silence journalists, human rights defenders, dissenters, and groups belonging to minority populations, particularly from Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There is no law criminalizing enforced disappearances and there persists a lack of accountability from the state. Families of the disappeared are regularly subject to [harassment](#), surveillance and intimidation by the state for demanding accountability for their loved ones.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English or your own language

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: October 28, 2024

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Ahmad Farhad (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/8072/2024/en/>