

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif
Prime Minister House, Pakistan Secretariat
Constitution Avenue
Islamabad, Pakistan

Brussels, 21 May 2014

Re: Concerns regarding the killing of Mr Rashid Rehman, a human rights lawyer

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further thirteen European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE express its profound shock over information that we have received about Mr Rashid Rehman, a human rights defender and lawyer. On 7 May 2014, Mr Rashid Rehman was shot and killed in an attack on his office in Kutchery Square, Multan. Two other people were injured in the shooting, which was carried out by two unknown men.

Mr Rashid Rehman was a human rights lawyer and a coordinator of the Punjab office of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in Multan. He advocated against the misuse of blasphemy laws in Pakistan and, since February 2014, had been working on the case of Junaid Hafeez, a lecturer at Bahauddin Zakariya University who was accused of blasphemy. It is reported that no lawyer was willing to take the case for a year because of fear of reprisals from extremist religious groups. According to the information that we received, the human rights lawyer was shot several times and pronounced dead on arrival at Nishtar Hospital. The police stated that the shooting was likely to be a targeted killing and that they were aware of threats that had been made against Mr Rashid Rehman.

The CCBE was informed that Mr Rashid Rehman has been attacked and threatened a number of times in the past. On 9 April 2014, Mr Rehman was threatened inside and outside the courtroom of the Multan Central Jail. Three unknown men also warned the human rights lawyer that if he did not drop the case, he would not be able to come to court to represent his client. No case was registered against the three men at the time, even though Mr Rehman reportedly submitted a complaint regarding the threats.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be

threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Moreover Article 17 states that:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

In view of the above, the CCBE condemns in the strongest terms the killing of Mr Rashid Rehman and respectfully urges your Excellency to launch a full and impartial investigation into his killing with a view to bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards. The CCBE also asks you to take all necessary measures to guarantee in all circumstances that lawyers in Pakistan are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisal and restrictions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aldo Bulgarelli', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Aldo BULGARELLI
President