

His Excellency Mr Asif Ali Zardari  
The President of Pakistan  
President's Secretariat  
Islamabad  
Pakistan

Brussels, 18 June 2012

**RE: Concerns regarding the situation of lawyer, Ms Asma Jahangir**

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 has also observer representatives from a further eleven 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 writes to express its concerns over the situation of a lawyer, Ms Asma Jahangir, whose security is at risk following information of a death plot by Pakistan's security forces. Ms Jahangir, an advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and President of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan, is a leading human rights activist and founder of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). Between 1998 and 2004 she served as the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, while between 2004 and 2010 as the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The CCBE has been informed that on 4 June 2012 the HRCP alerted Amnesty International that it had received information of a plot by Pakistan's security forces to kill Ms Jahangir. As Pakistan's leading human rights defender, Ms Jahangir has been threatened many times before, however, the information available at this instance does not appear to have been intentionally circulated as means of intimidation, but leaked from within Pakistan's security apparatus. As a result, Ms Jahangir fears for her life and has not moved from her home.

The CCBE is deeply concerned about this situation and the fact that the threats against Ms Jahangir are directly related to her peaceful and legitimate activities as a lawyer and human rights defender. The CCBE is alarmed that killings of human rights defenders in Pakistan have increased over the last year.

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:

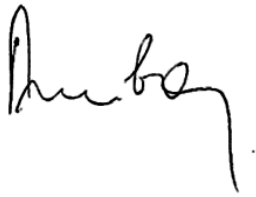
*Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.*

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

*Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.*

In view of the above, the CCBE urges you to take effective and immediate steps to guarantee the security of Ms Asma Jahangir and that full investigation of individuals and institutions suspected of being involved in the alleged plot to kill her is conducted. The CCBE also urges you to bring to justice all suspected perpetrators of attacks on human rights defenders in Pakistan and take all necessary measures to guarantee that lawyers in Pakistan are able to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Yours sincerely,



Marcella PRUNBAUER-GLASER

CCBE President