Umar Cheema’s Abduction - September 2010

Associated Press Of Pakistan ( Pakistan's Premier NEWS Agency ) - Gilani phones Umar Cheema, sympathises over torture incident

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Gilani phones Umar Cheema, sympathises over torture incident

ISLAMABAD, Sep 4 (APP): Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani rang up Umar Cheema, Correspondent of the Daily "The News" to express grief and sorrow over the unfortunate incident of kidnapping and torture. The Prime Minister assured him that the matter would be thoroughly investigated to bring the culprits to book. He further apprised him that he had already issued orders for judicial inquiry. The Prime Minister during his telephonic conversation with the journalist said that Pakistan People’s Party believed in the freedom of press and its leadership had given sacrifices for the independence of media.

He further said that he himself has a journalistic background and strongly believes in freedom of expression.

He further mentioned that he has personally called him to express solidarity with him and the journalist community.

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SEPTEMBER 05, 2010

PRESS FREEDOM: PAKISTANI JOURNALIST UMAR CHEEMA ABDUCTED, TORTURED

In an interview with SAJA in 2008, Pakistani
journalist Umar Cheema said that it was only rural
areas that are “volatile or hostile to journalists...not
urban areas.” But what happened with Cheema on
Sept. 4, 2010, tells a different story.

Cheema, a reporter with The News International in Islamabad and the 2008
Daniel Pearl Fellow at The New York Times was “tortured and
humiliated during 6-hour captivity after abduction by unidentified
men from Islamabad,” The News International reported.

According to the news portal, a group of men covered his face and
took him to a building 45 to 50 minutes drive while he was returning
home after meeting his friends.

“A few unknown men wearing uniforms of Elite Force came up to
me, saying I crushed a man at Zero Point and drove off and then
these men forcibly took me along with them,” Umar Cheema said. “I
was held in illegal captivity for 6 hours during which I was
continuously tortured and humiliated in nude. They stripped me out
of my clothes, hung me upside down and shaved off my head and
moustaches,” the senior reporter of the country’s leading English
daily recounted.

Café Pysa, a blog that follows the news from Pakistan and
Pakistani media wrote that Cheema was “stripped naked, hung
upside down and beaten severely before his head and moustache
were shaved off.” According to the blog, Cheema, who is an
PAC condemns attack on reporter

New York—Pakistan American Congress (PAC), an organisation of several Pakistani American Organisations, has strongly condemned the attack on Umar Cheema, an investigative reporter of The News and Daily Jang.

This coward and shameful act against a journalist is a direct attack on the freedom of press in Pakistan, which must be condemned by all members of the civil society and must be stopped, said a press release of PAC here Sunday.

"PAC holds Government of Pakistan fully responsible for this barbaric attack and demands a full judicial inquiry to prove that it is not involved in this heinous crime," said PAC president Muhammad Akram.

Dr. Akram said just a few days ago a similar incident took place in Sialkot where the reporter of a TV station was severely beaten and injured just because he exposed the death of two innocent brothers. "Several other incidents show a continuous trend to silence the voice of people. Such acts of calculated terrorism are just as shameful and condemnable as suicide attacks by terrorists on processions and places of worship."

The PAC appreciated the statement of Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani and the interior minister Rehman Malik for full investigation of this barbaric act. However, it said, such statements mean nothing unless they are followed by tangible actions. "So far government has shown no action, which shows that, the government may be covering up the crime, as it has routinely done in many other similar incidents. To stop future such attacks, the PAC demands full protection of journalists and freedom of the media," Dr. Akram said.—NNI
Journalists killed and injured in Quetta bombing, reporter kidnapped in Islamabad

Published on 6 September 2010

The level of violence that Pakistani journalists are facing nowadays is entirely unacceptable. The events of the past three days in which two TV employees were killed in Quetta and an investigative journalist was kidnapped in Islamabad need a response from the Pakistani authorities and the international community.

A cameraman and a TV station driver were killed and six other journalists were seriously injured in a suicide bombing on 3 September in Quetta and the ensuing acts of revenge violence by demonstrators who were targeted by the bombing. The overall death toll was 59. In Islamabad, an investigative newspaper reporter was kidnapped, mistreated and humiliated the next day by uniformed gunmen who may have been members of the security services.

“At a time when the country seeks everyone’s help in coping with disastrous flooding, Jihadis terrorists and certain members of the security services continue to target civilians, including media employees,” Reporters Without Borders said. “Such criminal behaviour and recourse to thuggish methods is absolutely incredible.”

Quetta bloodshed

The media fatalities in Quetta, the capital of the southwestern province of Balochistan, were Samaa TV cameraman Ejaz Raisani and Muhammad Sarwar, the driver of an Aaj News live broadcast van. The six seriously injured journalists were Fateh Shah of Dawn News, Mustafa Tareen of ARY News TV, Noor Elahi Bugti of Samaa TV, Irfad Haot of Express News TV, Shahid Mukhtar of Express News and Imran Mukhtar of Geo TV.
Why my attackers failed but gave me strength—>Umar Cheema views in TheNews

Why my attackers failed but gave me strength—>Umar Cheema views in TheNews

ISLAMABAD (Umar Cheema) The wee hours of late Saturday brought a metamorphosis in my life. Not just that I was muffed, picked up, tortured, and humiliated. No absolutely not. Rather the torture has removed the remaining fear, if there was any in my heart and mind, and has instead given me the realization that we have to die fighting for this country. My love for this country is based on some reasoning which is inspired by my firm belief that we can neither change our past nor our national identity. I learned this during my stay abroad for one and a half years when I went for studies, first in the US and then in UK. Lord Curzinz’s words that “exile is a nursery of nationalism” always keep resonating in my ears. Let us suppose I decide to settle abroad. I will again be Pakistani-British or Pakistani-American and the prefix ‘Pakistani’ cannot be dropped from my identity. It is always counted where you’re rooted. So I have to stay attached and take care of my country wherever I am. Having decided to live and die in this land, I have a dream to see Pakistan where brains, not batons reign supreme, where people can question the use of public money, where all institutions can be held accountable without any fear or favour, where our children love to live instead of fear to live, and where we are governed by the rule of law and not on the basis of personal loyalties. The message of my captors for me was to become a status quo abiding person, not law abiding. They forced me through violence to accept their views and become a silent spectator to the rot without questioning what was happening to my beloved country. I instead learned a different lesson from the torture and humiliation, to stand guard for this country, help the oppressed, keep questioning the high and mighty and continue the struggle to make this land livable and safe for the next generation. The captors thought themselves to be heroes but emerged as villains and will go down in the history with same status. I feel pity for them. They were born innocent but forced to become sick minds. Instead of cursing them, I only pray for them because they don’t know we’re fighting for their betterment too. My captors were probably not aware that I was also hit by a car in December 2004 that left me with compound fractures in my left leg. But I never bowed to those attackers either. Although I’ve forgiven my captors but not forgotten the perpetrators of this act that should be exposed and this mind-set be eliminated once and for all. I believe in reporting with a moral force without any personal grudges against anybody or any institution. Whenever I write about anyone, the concerned people have always been approached for their version to balance my reporting. It is however a different story that those without answers to our questions try to propagate as if the stories are being planted and we are being bribed for doing this. Such excuses are crafted by the individuals and institutions not inclined to revisit their conduct. But they don’t know that we, by virtue of our profession, have been tasked to unfold the truth, no matter who is affected by whatever way. Some consider journalism as a shortcut to rise on the ladder to political power but we are here to protect the interest of people, neither our own nor of the rulers. I have no words to thank so many of my well-wishers in Pakistan and abroad for consoling me and praying for me. I didn’t know many of them before. I was amazed to note how they struggled to reach me. Due to the flood of calls, I could not attend most of them. It was a silent majority that rose against the oppression of a tiny minority claiming to have monopoly on violence. There was a mixed reaction to this incident. Those who didn’t know me gave me a new strength and conviction, emboldened me further and offered all-out help. People, who know me for years, were concerned about me and my family’s security. They think that I should think about my children. This is a question which comes to every parent’s mind. I would like to explain that the
Abduction, torture of Umar Cheema

LHC CJ directs SP to appear in court during suo motu proceedings

Staff Report

Lahore: Lahore High Court Chief Justice Khawaja Muhammad Sharif on Monday directed the Islamabad superintendent of police (Investigation) to appear during suo motu proceedings against the abduction and torture of a journalist, Umar Cheema, by unidentified assailants.

The CJ directed the SP to appear on September 15 along with a progress report on the matter. On Monday, Islamabad SSP Tahir Alam appeared and stated that as far as no arrest had been made. He informed that a special investigating team had been formed consisting of the CIA DSP and CID SP under the supervision of the Industrial Area SP to nab the culprits.

The CJ took suo motu notice on a news report, according to which unidentified persons accompanied by personnel of Elite Police abducted Umar Cheema, a reporter of an English daily, from Sector 1-8, Islamabad and detained him for six hours. They subjected him to severe torture by hanging him naked upside down and also shaved his head and moustache. The abductors let him go after threatening him of dire consequences if he did not abandon writing stories against the government.
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