

# DAY OF THE ENDANGERED LAWYER 2020

## Endangered Lawyers in Pakistan

*Giornata dell'avvocato minacciato*

लुप्तप्राय वकील दिवस

يوم المحامي المهدد

Ημέρα του Δικηγόρου που Κινδυνεύει



受迫害律師日

*Journée des avocats en danger*

Tehlikedeki avukatlar günü

ਸੰਕਟਮਈ ਵਕੀਲ ਦਾ ਦਿਨ

*El Día del Abogado Amenazado*

TAG DER BEDROHTEN ANWÄLTE

FOUNDATION



**"THE DAY OF THE ENDANGERED LAWYER BRINGS LAWYERS TOGETHER"**

Haarlem, the Netherlands  
June 9th, 2020

## **Report Day of the Endangered Lawyer 2020 – PAKISTAN**

On the TENTH Day of the Endangered Lawyer in 2020, we focused on the situation of lawyers in Pakistan. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, a wave of solidarity started in Manilla and ended in Vancouver. In this report, we present you reports and publications about the Day of the Endangered Lawyer 2020. We attach pictures of the demonstrations and activities held on the Day itself. The Day was supported by many lawyer and bar associations.

### Background of the attacks on lawyers

The situation for lawyers in Pakistan is quite dangerous, especially if lawyers take risks such as defending clients for blasphemy.

Over the past decades, lawyers in Pakistan have been subjected to acts of mass terrorism, murder, attempted murder, assaults, (death) threats, contempt proceedings, harassment and intimidation, as well as judicial harassment and torture in detention, merely for engaging in their professional duties as lawyers. Their families have also been targeted, and some were even murdered. Some lawyers have also been threatened with disbarment and/or had their homes and offices raided by the police.

The most notorious attack on lawyers in Pakistan occurred on August 8, 2016, when terrorists attacked the Government Hospital of Quetta through a suicide bombing and shooting which resulted in the death of 54 lawyers.

The alleged perpetrators of attacks against lawyers have been terrorists, religious zealots, the police and unreported sources. There also have been reports that pro-government militias (which still exist today) have been behind some of the murders. The threats are multiple.

The IDHAE Observatoire made a very impressive report for the Day 2020, 'Les cent cas du Pakistan' (see: <https://www.idhbb.org/pdf/SuppPAKISTAN2020.pdf>).

#### Lawyers in blasphemy cases

The situation of Christian lawyers or members of minority Muslim groups is also of great concern. In some cases, lawyers have been killed for belonging to the Shi'ite religion that forms the Muslim minority in Pakistan.

Moreover, in many cases, lawyers have been identified with their clients and their clients' causes, and they have been violently attacked for their representation. For example, it is well-known that an accusation of blasphemy commonly exposes the accused, as well as the lawyers who represent them and the judges who adjudicate their cases, to harassment, threats, physical attacks and rioting. Many people accused of blasphemy in Pakistan were murdered before their trials were concluded, and prominent figures who opposed the blasphemy law were assassinated. In fact, since 1990, 62 people have been murdered following blasphemy allegations.

Lawyers, too, have been subject to retribution simply because they represented those accused of blasphemy. According to a basic tenet of the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, lawyers should not be identified with their clients and/or their clients' causes.

However, the Taliban and other religious terrorist groups still have a serious presence in many parts of Pakistan and still frequently carry out attacks, and lawyers from Pakistan face a constant threat of targeted violence, including murder, simply because they represent clients accused of blasphemy. In response to all these repeated attacks, Pakistani lawyers frequently strike, demonstrate, protest and hold boycotts.

#### **DEMONSTRATIONS AND EVENTS ON THE DAY OF THE ENDANGERED LAWYER 2020**

On five continents and in 41 cities lawyers held rallies or events on the Day of the Endangered Lawyer 2020 in support of the lawyers in Pakistan. Once again, the Day of the Endangered Lawyer was a huge success and new countries and cities joined such as Australia, New Zealand and Peru.

Like in earlier years, in several European cities such as The Hague, Paris, Brussels and Berlin lawyers dressed in their lawyers robe and held demonstrations in front of the Pakistani Embassies or at other important national and international institutions, to ask for attention and awareness of the situation of their fellow colleagues in Pakistan.

On the initiative of the IAPL and the Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer, the Pakistani lawyer Saif ul-Malook (Asia Bibi's lawyer) made a tour through many European cities and spoke on conferences in Rome, Paris, London, Amsterdam and The Hague, which were very well attended.

Most countries, cities and bar associations offered a petition to the Embassy, holding a plea to the government to support the human rights lawyers. In many countries, the Day was given attention by press, radio or television.

Following the Day of the Endangered Lawyer, there were follow-up activities in several cities, like in the Netherlands where lawyers were invited afterwards to the Embassy to discuss the situation in Kashmir. In Rome, the lawyers delegation met with the Chancellor of the Embassy.

Attached you will find a list of cities in which lawyers demonstrated or organized other actions on behalf of their colleagues (attachment 1).

We are grateful to all the Bar organizations and lawyer federations all over the world, who supported the project for the Day 2020. You find all the active members of the Coalition with their logo's on the last pages of the petition.

On the website <http://dayoftheendangeredlawyer.eu> you can find more information on the situation of human rights lawyers in Pakistan and other countries, a short film about actions we have realized in 2017 in The Hague, as well as how to support the work of the Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer.

Finally, we thank the very active members of the preparation and coordination group for their tireless work which made the Day very successful. Many thanks to:

- Thomas Schmidt (ELDH)
- Gail Davidson (LRWC)
- Stuart Russell (IADL)
- Romina Bossa Abiven (UIA)

Attachments can be found at our website, directly below the link to this document:

1. the list of cities where actions were undertaken.

2. a selection of photos and publications of the demonstrations and events that were organised around the world on this 10th Day of the Endangered Lawyer.
3. the Basic Report on the situation of lawyers in Pakistan.

**Hans and Symone Gaasbeek**

**On behalf of the Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer**