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## PAKISTAN | Militants Issue Death Threats in Murder Case

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has received deeply concerning reports that several key people involved in the case against four militants accused of assassinating Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs, have received death threats from militant Islamist groups.

Paul Bhatti, the brother of Shahbaz Bhatti, formerly a federal minister and an advisor to the prime minister on minorities affairs, received a letter from the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), warning him he would suffer the same fate as his brother if he did not stop pursuing justice. Other lawyers and eyewitnesses involved in the case have also received death threats.

Earlier reports suggested Paul Bhatti, brother of Shahbaz Bhatti and to the previous prime minister, was forced to flee the country. However, he told CSW he was fulfilling prior travel arrangements and plans to return to Pakistan soon. He said, "I have a huge community there, and I cannot leave them this way."

Shahbaz Bhatti, the Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs, was assassinated in his car in broad daylight on March 2, 2011 for his opposition to the country's blasphemy laws and his support of a Christian blasphemy defendant.

Pamphlets left at the scene indicated that the TTP took responsibility for the murder, but nobody has been brought to justice almost three years later. However, four TTP militants were arrested in September 2013 and charged with the murder. They are currently being tried in an anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi.

CSW's South Asia Team Leader David Griffiths said, "There is a clear threat of vigilante justice here, and the government of Pakistan must act swiftly to provide protection for all those under threat, and ensure that the law is able to take its course. Shahbaz Bhatti was murdered at a time when he had no protection at all, and the threat posed by Islamist militants is real and severe. We therefore urge the Pakistani government to act now to avert any more tragedies, and ensure that the rule of law is upheld."