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## **PAKISTAN | Greater Protection Called for Human Rights Defenders**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling on the government of Pakistan to uphold greater protections for human rights defenders following the murder of activist Zafar Lund on July 14.

Zafar Lund was shot in the head by unidentified assailants and died outside of his home in Kot Addu, Punjab Province. Zafar was the founder of a civil society forum which aims to protect water rights and the communities dependent on the Indus River in Kot Addu. He promoted local Saraiki folklore and storytelling as well as supporting education and the rights of the child.

Violence against human rights activists across Pakistan is increasing. In a written statement, to the UN Human Rights Council in 2015, CSW highlighted the threats against and intimidation of human rights defenders in Pakistan by both state and non-state actors.

Among other measures, CSW recommended that the government of Pakistan should combat the culture of impunity and bring to justice all perpetrators of attacks and threats against lawyers, judges and human rights defenders. CSW also recommended that government should honor its obligations under the constitution and international treaties to protect those defending human rights and ensure that they are not intimidated or harassed for their professional activities.

In its 2012 UN Universal Periodic Review, Pakistan accepted recommendations including developing a national policy for the protection of human rights defenders and protecting their right to life and freedom of expression but has failed to implement them.

On May 7, Khurram Zaki, a prominent human rights campaigner and editor, was shot dead by four unknown assailants while he was having dinner at a restaurant in North Karachi. Zaki was one of a group of civil society campaigners who filed a case in January against Maulana Abdul Aziz, the cleric of Lal Masjid (Red Mosque), who was accused of inciting sectarian hatred and violence against Shi'a Muslims.

CSW's South Asia Team Leader Steven Selvaraj said, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the

family of Zafar Lund. CSW urges the Pakistani government to consult with civil society with regards to what security measures can be implemented for their greater protection, and to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are not treated with impunity, which will only fuel further violence against human rights defenders.”