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## PAKISTAN | Concerns Raised About Missing Activists

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is concerned about the recent enforced disappearance of four human rights activists in Pakistan.

Waqas Goraya and his cousin, Asim Saeed, Pakistanis residing in the Netherlands, went missing from Lahore on Jan. 4. Professor Salman Haider disappeared in Islamabad on Jan. 6, followed by Ahmed Raza Naseer on Jan. 7.

The four activists, who have campaigned for human rights including the right to freedom of religion or belief, had a blasphemy case registered against them. On their blog, they reported on human rights violations committed by security forces and religious extremists in Pakistan.

Their disappearance follows that of several other human rights activists, including female activist Zeenat Shehzadi. The only disappearance that the federal government confirmed it is investigating is that of Salman Haider, who is also a poet and professor at Fatima Jinnah Women's University in Rawalpindi. He has been outspoken about enforced disappearances, especially in the province of Balochistan. Protests have been taking place across Pakistan against the abductions of activists.

Speaking to CSW, Pakistani human rights defender Tahira Abdullah said, "Previously we used to raise our voices for the enforced disappeared in Balochistan province, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), rural Sindh and other parts of Pakistan – now we are demanding the safe return of our fellow activists."

"Pakistan must ratify the *UN International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance* and the existing Commission in Pakistan must be made independent, autonomous and strong, in order to effectively handle the alleged cases of thousands of reported disappearances over the past 16 years. Professor Salman Haider and the reported 10

other abducted rights activists and bloggers must be traced and returned home immediately. Freedom of expression is our inalienable and fundamental human right,” Abdullah said.

In 2016, CSW reported on the targeted killings of activists Khurram Zaki and Zafar Lund and, in a statement at the Human Rights Council in 2015, urged the government of Pakistan to honor its obligations under the constitution and international treaties to protect those defending human rights.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “CSW is deeply concerned by the enforced disappearances of Waqas Goraya, Asim Saeed, Professor Salman Haider and Ahmed Raza Naseer. Human rights activists in Pakistan continue to be exposed to a range of threats and challenges including abductions, attacks, threats, and targeted killings, aimed at preventing them from speaking out on injustices occurring within the country. We urge the government of Pakistan to investigate both these and historic cases involving human rights activists in the country and work with human rights defenders to develop a national system for their protection.”