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Pakistan: Human rights defender and journalist Sajid Hussain found dead in Sweden

On 23 April 2020, the body of disappeared human rights defender and journalist Sajid Hussain was recovered from a river in Uppsala, Sweden. Sajid Hussain, a Pakistani journalist and Baloch rights activist, had sought refuge in Sweden as he was compelled to leave Pakistan in 2012 due to threats to his life. On 2 March 2020, the human rights defender went missing, after he was last seen boarding a train from Stockholm to Uppsala. His body was found nearly two months later.

[Sajid Hussain](#) was the editor of the Balochistan Times news website and had been a critical voice against human rights violations committed by the Pakistani state, especially the military, against the Baloch community in Pakistan. He worked as a journalist in Pakistan for several years covering issues of corruption and human rights violations. In 2012 the human rights defender was forced to leave Pakistan due to serious threats against his life. He arrived in Sweden in 2017 and was granted political asylum in 2019. Despite being forced to leave Pakistan, Sajid Hussain continued his peaceful human rights work and advocacy in exile. He started the Balochistan Times which covered the human rights context in Balochistan including abuses, detentions, and enforced disappearances by the Pakistani military in the troubled region. At the point of his disappearance, Sajid was due to start a masters program at the Uppsala university, and his wife and two young children aged nine and five years were to join him in Sweden this year.

On 2 March 2020, at around 11 AM, Sajid Hussain boarded a train from Stockholm to Uppsala. When he failed to answer his phone or respond to messages the following day, a friend alerted the Swedish police to his disappearance and an investigation was commenced a day later on 4 March 2020. Family and colleagues of the human rights defender had expressed concern and frustration at the pace of the investigation, which according to them only began in earnest around 28 March 2020, nearly a month following his disappearance. Following the discovery of his body, in an Uppsala river on 23 April 2020, there is an urgent need for a prompt and effective inquiry into his death which takes into account his work as a human rights defender and a previous history of threats and attacks..

Pakistan is one of the world's most dangerous countries for press freedom and journalists, with it ranking at 142 out of 180 countries in [RSF's 2019 World Press Freedom Index](#). Threats, intimidation and harassment against human rights defenders by Pakistani authorities is unfortunately not limited to those living within its borders. Exiled [journalists](#) and human rights defenders have suffered direct intimidation and also threats against their families in Pakistan. Given this context and the previous attempts made by the Pakistani authorities to silence Sajid Hussain the possibility that he was subjected to an enforced disappearance and subsequent killing as a result of his journalism in Pakistan must be seriously considered by the Swedish authorities.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the continuing violence and repression against human rights defenders and journalists in Pakistan. Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Pakistan to cease all harassment, violence and intimidation against journalists and human rights defenders living within and outside its borders, and to immediately ensure the protection and safety of Sajid Hussain's family who still live in Pakistan. It also urges the authorities in Sweden to consider both the history of threats against Sajid Hussain and Pakistan's previous targeting of journalists and human rights defenders in exile as they conduct an investigation into Sajid Hussain's death.

