

From the President

H.E. Mr. Mamnoon Hussain
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Presidency Road
Islamabad
Pakistan

By email: secretary@president.gov.pk

7 March 2017

Your Excellency

Disappearance - human rights defender Mr Samar Abbas

The Law Society is a professional body representing more than 166,000 lawyers in England and Wales. Its aims include upholding the independence of the legal profession, the rule of law and human rights around the world.

The Law Society is deeply concerned about the disappearance of Mr Samar Abbas, president of the Civil Progressive Alliance Pakistan (CPAP). We understand that Mr Abbas went missing between 4 and 7 January 2017 and that, prior to his disappearance, he had been active on social media on matters relating to ethnic minority rights in Pakistan. We are aware that his family filed a petition on 11 February 2017 with the Islamabad High Court to ask for his release. We have no further information on whether Mr Abbas is currently being held in detention. The Law Society is concerned that his disappearance may be connected to his human rights activism. We understand that Mr Abbas' disappearance is the fifth disappearance of a human rights defender that has occurred between 4 and 7 January 2017.

Pakistan ratified the **UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** on 23 June 2010:

Article 19

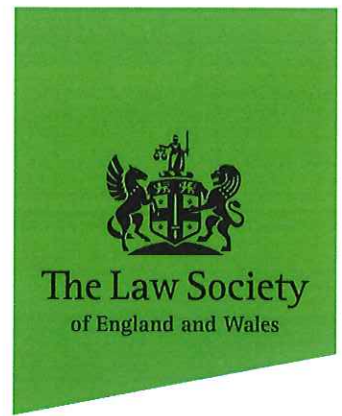
1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

Furthermore, the **UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms** (1998) provides:

Article 6

Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others:

- (a) To know, seek, obtain, receive and hold information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including having access to information as to how those rights and freedoms are given effect in domestic legislative, judicial or administrative systems;
- (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms;



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(c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters.

Article 12

1. Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

2. The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.

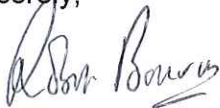
3. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We respectfully request the relevant authorities to:

1) Conduct an independent, expedient, and thorough investigation into the disappearance of Mr Samar Abbas and establish his whereabouts.

The Law Society will continue to monitor the situation of Mr Samar Abbas and other human rights defenders in Pakistan.

Yours sincerely,



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President

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cc.

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