



The Law Society of
Upper Canada | Barreau
du Haut-Canada

August 29, 2016

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif
Prime Minister House, Pakistan Secretariat
Constitution Avenue
Islamabad, Pakistan

Office of the Treasurer

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Prime Minister Sharif:

Re: Murder of Bilal Anwar Kasi and Lawyers in Pakistan

I write on behalf of the Law Society of Upper Canada* to voice our grave concern over the murder of Bilal Anwar Kasi, criminal lawyer and president of the Balochistan Bar Association, and the killing of a number of lawyers in a bomb attack in Quetta, Pakistan, on August 8, 2016. When serious issues of apparent injustice to lawyers and the judiciary come to our attention, we speak out.

It has come to our attention that on August, 8, 2016, Bilal Anwar Kasi was on his way to work on when he was shot and killed by unknown gunmen. Following his death, on the same day, approximately 200 lawyers gathered at the local hospital to protest and mourn the loss of their colleague. The lawyers were in the emergency department when a bomb exploded, killing over 70 people – the majority of them lawyers – and injuring many others. It is our understanding that Taliban faction Jamaat-ur-Ahrar and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) have taken responsibility for the murder of Bilal Anwar Kasi and for the bombing.

The Law Society is deeply saddened by the murder of Bilal Anwar Kasi and the deadly attack on lawyers in Pakistan. The Law Society believes strongly that lawyers should be able to exercise their legitimate duties without fear for their lives, for their liberty and for their security.

The Law Society of Upper Canada urges Your Excellency to comply with Pakistan's obligations under international human rights laws, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights* and the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on Role of Lawyers* states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

The Law Society urges the government of Pakistan to:

- a. conduct an immediate and impartial investigation into the murder of Bilal Anwar Kasi and the attack on lawyers in Pakistan and bring those responsible to justice;
- b. put an end to all acts of violence against lawyers and human rights defenders in Pakistan;
- c. ensure that all lawyers can carry out their legitimate activities without fear of physical violence or other human rights violations; and
- d. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

Yours very truly,

Paul Schabas
Treasurer

**The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 50,000 lawyers and 8,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society.*

The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

cc:

President, Balochistan Bar Association

Mr. Syed Ali Safar, President, Supreme Court Bar Association
Advocate
Supreme Court of Pakistan
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Mr. Abdul Fayaz
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Alex Neve, Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada

Mary Lawlor, Executive Director, Front Line Defenders

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Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch

Adrie van de Streek, Executive Director, Lawyers for Lawyers

David F. Sutherland, Chair, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Yves Berthelot, President, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Gabriela Knaul, Special Rapporteur of the Human Council on the independence of judges and lawyers, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Sarah Smith, Human Rights and Rule of Law Policy Adviser, The Law Society of England and Wales