



The Law Society of
Upper Canada

Barreau
du Haut-Canada

June 26, 2014

The Honourable Mr. Mamnoon Hussain
President of Pakistan
President's Secretariat
Islamabad
PAKISTAN

Office of the Treasurer

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Your Excellency President Hussain:

Re: murder of human rights lawyer Rashid Rehman

I write on behalf of The Law Society of Upper Canada* to voice our grave concern over the murder of human rights lawyer Rashid Rehman. When serious issues of apparent injustice to lawyers and the judiciary come to our attention, we speak out.

On May 7, 2014, Rashid Rehman, a prominent human rights lawyer and the regional coordinator for the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), was murdered in his office by two unidentified gunmen. The shooting and his death follow a number of death threats he received in connection to his work on behalf of Junaid Hafeez, a university lecturer and poet.

Rashid Rehman reported the death threats to the Punjab Chief Minister, the Inspector General of Punjab Police, the Multan City Police and the district Bar association. However, no action was taken to protect Rashid Rehman. The murder of Rashid Rehman raises the issue of the safety of human rights lawyers in Pakistan, especially those who represent people charged under the blasphemy laws.

Protecting the lives as well as the personal and professional safety of lawyers in Pakistan is integral to ensuring all people in Pakistan have access to legal services and to justice. When lawyers have reported death threats to government officials, there is a duty to investigate and protect those lawyers who have been threatened.

The Law Society is deeply concerned about situations where lawyers are targeted in the legitimate exercise of their duties. International human rights instruments, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* state that respect for human rights is essential to advancing the rule of law. Article 16 of the *United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states "governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely; and 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 18 states "lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions".

The Law Society urges the government of Pakistan to,

- a. guarantee all the procedural rights that should be accorded to human rights lawyers in Pakistan;
- b. put an end to all acts of harassment against human rights lawyers in Pakistan;
- c. ensure that all lawyers in Pakistan can carry out their peaceful and 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 in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

Yours very truly,

Janet E. Minor
Treasurer

**The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 46,000 lawyers and 6,300 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:

Mr. Mian Nawaz Sharif
Prime Minister
Prime Minister House
Islamabad
Pakistan

cc:

Mr. Shahbaz Sharif
Chief Minister
Government of Punjab Province
Chief Minister's Secretariat
5-Club Road, GOR-I,
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