

## Public Statement

### **The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concerns about the murder of lawyer Samiullah Afridi in Pakistan**

**Toronto** — The Law Society of Upper Canada is gravely concerned about the murder of lawyer Samiullah Afridi in Pakistan.

On March 17, 2015, lawyer Samiullah Afridi was shot dead by unidentified assailants while on his way home in Peshawar, Pakistan. According to reports, Samiullah Afridi defended Dr. Shakil Afridi (no relation), a doctor who allegedly assisted CIA agents with their hunt for al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. In 2013, Samiullah Afridi stated that he had received a number of death threats from militant groups and organizations. In May 2014, Samiullah Afridi stepped down from Dr. Afridi's case, stating that he had received threats to his life. Samiullah Afridi had recently returned to Pakistan after leaving Pakistan a few months prior.

Reports indicate that a Taliban faction has claimed responsibility for Samiullah Afridi's death.

In concern over these reports, The Law Society of Upper Canada urges the government of Pakistan to consider Articles 16 and 23 of the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 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, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Moreover, Article 23 states:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and

protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization.

The Law Society urges the government of Pakistan to:

- a. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of human rights lawyers in Pakistan;
- b. ensure that the investigation into the death of Samiullah Afridi is fair, impartial and independent;
- c. ensure that all lawyers can carry out their peaceful and legitimate activities without fear of physical violence or other human rights violations;
- d. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

*\*The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 47,000 lawyers and 7,000 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.*

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