



To: the Pakistan Prime Minister's Office

Amsterdam, 15 February 2024

Subject: Continued criminal investigations against human rights Lawyer Imaan Mazari-Hazir

Your Excellencies,

Lawyers for Lawyers would like to express its deep concern regarding the trial of Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir due to start Friday 16 February 2024, in follow up of our statement issued on 20 October 2023. Our organisation has strong reasons to believe that the criminal investigations against Imaan Mazari leading up to this trial are directly linked to her professional legal activities and vocal stance on human rights abuses.

Ms. Imaan Mazari is a distinguished human rights lawyer, widely respected for her advocacy on behalf of persecuted religious and ethnic communities, especially on offenses perpetrated by the Pakistani military and security forces. Her commitment to addressing human rights violations and abuses is celebrated, with a particular emphasis put on her being one of the few lawyers representing missing persons in the courts of Islamabad. Due to her substantial contributions and unwavering dedication she has experienced two successive arrests.

According to our information, Ms. Imaan Mazari was first arrested on 20 August 2023, as she faced charges under the Anti-Terrorism Act, for serious offenses such as sedition and incitement to riot under the Pakistan Penal Code, and "interference in State Affairs". The arrest, which was conducted without showing an arrest warrant or stating a reason for arrest, followed a public speech she delivered at a rally organised by the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) on 18 August 2023. This organisation advocates for the rights of ethnic Pashtuns affected by Pakistan's war against the Taliban in the northwest. During her speech, she courageously addressed alleged human rights violations related to the military, including strong criticisms of enforced disappearances. Following her initial arrest, Imaan Mazari was granted bail on 28 August, only to face a subsequent arrest a few hours later on different charges: the funding of terrorism. She was ultimately released on bail on 2 September 2023 but continues to fight the charges against her. It is reported that Imaan Mazari had previously assisted in securing the release of the organizers of the rally where she gave her speech, highlighting a direct connection between her work as a lawyer and her arrest following the rally speech.

This series of events underscores the challenges faced by lawyers like Imaan Mazari as they discharge their professional duties while also exercising their freedom of expression. It accentuates the critical importance of upholding the principles outlined in the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers. These principles are vital in ensuring that lawyers like Imaan Mazari can fulfill their professional

responsibilities and express their views without the looming threat of reprisals. In this context, two of these principles hold significance.

First, under article 16 of the United Nations (UN) Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, governments must ensure that lawyers “are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference” and requires that they “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.”

Second, article 23 of the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers states that: “Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right 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.”

In view of the above, Lawyers for Lawyers urgently and respectfully requests your Excellencies to immediately undertake the following steps:

- Immediately cease the arbitrary investigations into Ms Mazari and other lawyers that are aimed at impairing their work as human rights lawyers and their right to freedom of expression;
- Take measures with a view to repealing or substantially amending articles 124A and 188 of the Pakistan Penal Code, in compliance with international human rights law that protect the right to freedom of expression and information;
- Take all necessary measures to ensure the free exercise of the legal profession in Pakistan, in all circumstances, so that lawyers may exercise their legitimate professional rights and duties without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including harassment through legal processes.
- fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including harassment through legal processes.

We appreciate your urgent attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any comments or questions. We stand by to provide any assistance required.

Yours sincerely,


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