

26 May 2016

Pakistan - Transgender human rights defender Alesha shot dead

On 25 May 2016, transgender human rights defender **Alesha** died from six gunshot wounds received three days earlier, on 22 May 2016, in front of Asia Plaza in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

[Alesha](#) was the Peshawar Coordinator of the [Trans Action Alliance](#), a group which works for the promotion and protection of the rights of the transgender community in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

On 25 May 2016, Alesha passed away in the Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar having remained in a critical condition since the shooting. Despite Alesha's serious injuries, doctors refused to admit her to the Intensive Care Unit even after her surgery on the morning of 23 May 2016. The hospital claimed there were no beds available there. As a result, the human rights defender was forced to spend several hours on a stretcher in a corridor of the hospital without proper medical attention following her surgery. The shooting came to the attention of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province's Assembly Speaker Mr Asad Qaiser, who visited Alesha on her first day at the hospital. Only upon his direct order did the hospital authorities place the human rights defender in a private room, the cost of which must be covered by Alesha's family and friends.

On 23 May 2016, police officers from the Faqirabad police station in Peshawar opened an investigation into the attack on Alesha by registering a First Instance Report. Her killing was allegedly perpetrated by an organised criminal gang in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Trans Action had been campaigning against this group and their alleged nexus with law enforcement agencies in Pakistan. The Alliance's repeated attempts to seek help from local police have been ignored and little has been done in terms of ensuring their security.

On the night of 22 May 2016, Alesha was taken to Lady Reading Hospital in a critical condition with six gunshot wounds. The hospital administration however failed to provide her with urgent medical care, as it could not decide whether to send her to a male or female ward. Meanwhile, the human rights defender's friends who were waiting at the hospital with her began to experience harassment from both staff and patients.

Members of the Trans Action Alliance have previously faced persecution and harassment in connection with their human rights work. On 17 February 2016, a group of armed men led by a member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elite Police Force attempted to force transgender human rights defender **Chocolate** to leave her house with them before [threatening her with kidnapping](#). Chocolate is a board member and joint secretary of the Trans Action Alliance. Earlier, on 5 January 2016, the transgender human rights defender **Adnan**, co-administrator of the Trans Action Page, an online platform of the Trans Action Alliance, was [shot and critically wounded](#) in Peshawar. The human rights defender had reportedly been threatened for several months preceding the attack. Alesha became the fifth member of the Alliance to have been attacked this year. In total, approximately 45 transgender people have been killed and 300 have suffered various forms of violence in the last two years in the Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa province.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the gun attack on Alesha that led to her death, which we believe was motivated by her legitimate and peaceful work for the promotion and protection of transgender rights in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Front Line Defenders further expresses serious concern for the physical and psychological integrity of members of the Trans Action Alliance and all transgender human rights defenders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Pakistan to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of the transgender human rights defender Alesha, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of all members of the Trans Action Alliance and other transgender human rights defenders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Pakistan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.