

30 October 2019

Pakistan: Human Rights Defender Dr Khadim Hussain Dahot threatened and physically assaulted

On 31 August 2019, human rights defender, **Dr Khadim Hussain Dahot** was attacked by unidentified men outside his home in the Sindh province of Pakistan. The mob attacked the defender accusing him of inciting sectarian violence and committing blasphemy.

[Dr. Khadim Hussain Dahot](#) is a noted lawyer and human rights advocate in Pakistan. He is the founder and managing director of Sewa Development Trust Sindh, a not-for-profit NGO that works to empower and provide education and healthcare to underprivileged women, youth, and children. The Trust carries out these activities through live-streaming technology and the provision of learning facilities in remote areas of the Sindh province of Pakistan. Dr Dahot works for the rights of marginalised communities to foster peace and social harmony and counter violent extremism among vulnerable populations.

On 31 August 2019, at 11:00pm, Dr Khadim Hussain Dahot was attacked outside his house by a mob insinuating that he had committed blasphemy. The assailants were chanting slogans and hurling abuses, and physically attacked the defender, his father and other members of the family who were present at his house at the time. The mob only dispersed after the intervention of local police constables and neighbours who had rushed to the scene after hearing the commotion. The assailants were heard yelling out death threats as they left the premises. Following the incident, the human rights defender registered a First Information Report (FIR) with the local police and also notified several other authorities. Dr Khadim Hussain Dahot has not received any protection nor have the police taken any action towards bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Dr Khadim Hussain Dahot, believes that the assailants did not act by themselves, and were backed by influential people who have strong religious and political affiliations. There has been a pattern of ongoing harassment against Dr Dahot particularly since he released statistics on child sexual abuse and the situation of child rights in Pakistan at a press conference in 2008. During the fifteen years of his work in the defence of human rights, Dr Dahot has had his passport stolen four times. Every time he has approached the relevant authorities, the complaints have not been formally registered, severely restricting his freedom of movement. In addition to this, there have also been threats directed towards his organisation, Sewa Development Trust Sindh, for its work with marginalised communities.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the lack of action from the side of the authorities and strongly condemns the attack and repeated intimidation and harassment of Dr Khadim Hussain Dahot, as it believes that they are directly motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Pakistan to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attacks and threats made against Dr Khadim Hussain Dahot with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Guarantee Dr Khadim Hussain Dahot's physical and psychological security and integrity, as well as that of his family;

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, including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 6 (c): *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters,”* Article 9 (1): *“In the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the promotion and protection of human rights as referred to in the present Declaration, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to benefit from an effective remedy and to be protected in the event of the violation of those rights”,* and to Article 12 (2): *“The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”*

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director