

8 July 2019

Pakistan: Continued Threats, Violence and Harassment against family and supporters of WHRD Gulalai Ismail

The family, supporters and associates of Pakistani WHRD **Gulalai Ismail**, continue to face threats, violence and harassment by officers of the Pakistani Military and Intelligence service since 25 May 2019.

[Gulalai Ismail](#) is an award-winning woman human rights defender and co-founder of Aware Girls who has been forced into hiding following at least two First Information Reports (FIRs) being filed against her on 22 May and 23 May by police in Islamabad. The FIRs mention serious offenses including sedition under the Penal Code and Sections 6/7 of the regressive Anti Terrorism Act.

Front Line Defenders has previously issued an [urgent appeal](#) expressing its concern against the filing of false and baseless allegations against Gulalai Ismail which appear to be an attempt to silence and intimidate the human rights defender and is a direct reprisal against her vocal criticism of the Pakistan State and human rights violations by the Pakistan military in particular.

While Gulalai has been forced into hiding out of fear for her safety, the family and associates of the human rights defender have suffered continuous harassment. The police first raided the family home in Islamabad on 25 May. At around 4 am, A large contingent of armed police in at least 8 vehicles ransacked the parents home and threatened her family. In two subsequent raids, police and intelligence officers threatened Gulalai's family, confiscated mobile devices belonging to Gulalai's father and her younger sister, and took away the CCTV cameras installed at their home. The officers also forcibly photographed and threatened Gulalai's younger sister Shughla Ismail, who closely resembles Gulalai. Family members believe they are under surveillance, with both their movements and communications being monitored by the State.

On 4 July, the family home was raided three times, by a large number of armed men in both plainclothes and police uniform. On the first two occasions, only Gulalai's parents were at home. However, at around 4 pm, the police raided the house for the third time and questioned Gulalai's brother and family driver who had arrived home a few minutes earlier. Gulalai's brother, a US citizen, had returned to Pakistan a few days prior to the raid in order to support his parents and family, who have been under tremendous pressure and fear for their safety. The police and intelligence officers questioned Gulalai's brother and arbitrarily detained the family driver who was held at an unknown location for around 8 hours before being released. The family believes that the driver was targeted and tortured due to his association with Gulalai.

Front Line Defenders is extremely concerned about the immediate threats to Gulalai Ismail and her family and for their physical safety.

Front Line Defenders calls on the Pakistani government to:

1. Immediately revoke the FIRs against Gulalai Ismail and ensure her safety and security within Pakistan and guarantee her the fundamental rights and freedoms as a citizen and also as a peaceful human rights defender
2. Ensure the safety and security of the family members, associates and colleagues of Gulalai Ismail and cease all forms of harassment and threats against Gulalai's family and supporters.
3. Guarantee all human rights defenders a safe and enabling environment in which to carry out their peaceful work.