

**DUBLIN**

Front Line Defenders – Head Office
First Floor, Avoca Court
Temple Road, Blackrock
Co. Dublin, A94 R7W3, Ireland

info@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +353 1 212 3750
fax +353 1 233 8695

BRUSSELS

Front Line Defenders – EU Office
Square Marie-Louise 72
1000 Brussels
Belgium

euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +32 2 230 9383
fax +32 2 230 0028

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Pakistan: Imaan Zainab Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha violently arrested despite court order

On 23 January 2026, the Islamabad police arbitrarily arrested human rights defenders and lawyers **Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir** and **Hadi Ali Chattha** without presenting a warrant and despite a court order issued by the Islamabad High Court on 21 January 2026, granting them temporary relief from arrest.

[Imaan Mazari](#) is a human rights lawyer who has represented countless victims of human rights violations, taking up cases of enforced disappearances, extra judicial killings, arbitrary arrest and custodial violations. Through her work, she has guaranteed access to justice, redress for human rights defenders, victims and their families against the oppressive practices of state authorities, especially the military, police, and intelligence agencies. [Hadi Ali Chattha](#) is a human rights lawyer who has represented countless victims of false blasphemy cases, sexual violence, rape and enforced disappearances in Pakistan. He has worked with the Justice Project Pakistan in cases on death-row prisoners and the Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell.

On 23 January 2026, Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha were violently arrested by Islamabad police while traveling from the Islamabad High Court to appear before the District Sessions Court for a hearing in the controversial 'tweets case'. At the time of their arrest, the human rights defenders were accompanied by the President of the Islamabad High Court Bar Association and its Secretary. Neither a warrant nor a first information report (FIR) were produced at the time of arrest. The human rights defenders were forcibly removed from their vehicle and taken to an undisclosed location. It has since been reported that they have been produced before an anti-terrorism court (ATC) without the presence of their lawyers. No information has been shared with family members regarding their whereabouts or the legal basis for which they are being held.

On 21 January 2026, the Islamabad High Court granted the human rights defenders relief from arrest during the 'tweets case', reinstated their bail and granted the right to a complete defence. On 15 January 2026, the District Sessions Court had cancelled bail for Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha and ordered their immediate arrest on false allegations of not appearing before the Court. The Court also dismissed their right to cross examine prosecution witnesses and defend their case.

Following the decision of the Islamabad High Court, Pakistani police resurfaced several old FIRs in which Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha are named, including a complaint against 150 lawyers for a protest outside the Islamabad High Court in 2025. The production of these FIRs and the selective targeting of Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha is a blatant attempt to ensure their incarceration.

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In August 2025, the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) filed a case against Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha under [Sections](#) 9, 10, 11, and 26A of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA). The case is based on tweets published between 2021 and 2025 which are critical of human rights violations in Balochistan and Khyber Phaktunkwa. Since October 2025, the human rights defenders have been subjected to an accelerated trial during which they have been denied due process rights including the right to legal representation. Additionally, there have been repeated attempts to arrest the human rights defenders during the trial process. On 29 October 2025, Hadi Ali Chattha was arrested briefly during the case, despite being present in court.

Over the past several years, the authorities in Pakistan have systematically targeted Imaan Mazari and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha due to their representation of jailed Baloch human rights defenders including Dr. Mahrang Baloch, and speaking out against human rights violations in Balochistan, Khyber Phaktunkwa by the military and intelligence agencies. They have also been targeted as a result of defending clients in false blasphemy cases. Imaan Mazari has been subjected to numerous false allegations in recent years, including her arbitrary arrest under the Anti Terrorism Act (ATA) in 2024. Over the past year, there have also been concerns regarding attempts to intimidate, and even arrest the two human rights defenders on false allegations of blasphemy by the Pakistani police.

The criminalisation of dissent under PECA in the 'tweets case' is just one more example of how authorities in Pakistan resort to judicial persecution, violence and harassment of human rights defenders who speak out against human rights violations. Pakistan refuses to engage legitimately on concerns regarding blatant abuses carried out by its security forces including enforced disappearances and extra judicial killings, most starkly evident in Balochistan and Khyber Pakthunkwa.

Front Line Defenders is extremely concerned for the safety of Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha. The human rights defenders have been repeatedly targeted through the use of regressive laws and baseless FIRs to punish them for their legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders calls on the Government of Pakistan to:

1. Immediately release Imaan Zainab Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha and dismiss all criminal cases against them;
2. Pending release, ensure that Imaan Zainab Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha are guaranteed their safety in detention, immediate access to lawyers, family members and medical attention;
3. Conduct an immediate and effective inquiry into the violent arrest of Imaan Zainab Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha by the Islamabad police with a view towards holding those responsible to account for their arbitrary actions;
4. Cease the abuse of laws including PECA and the Anti Terrorism Act as well as counter terror measures to target human rights defenders in Pakistan and move towards repeal or reform of regressive legislation.
5. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Pakistan are able to free carry out their human rights work free without the fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions.

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