



International Network for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
Red Internacional para los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales
Réseau international pour les droits économiques, sociaux et culturels
الشبكة العالمية للحقوق الاقتصادية و الاجتماعية و الثقافية

TO:

Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan

Board

Cathy Albisa
National Economic and
Social Rights Initiative,
USA

Ruth Aura Odhiambo
Federation of Women
Lawyers, Kenya

Saeed Baloch
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum,
Pakistan

Hasan Barghouthi
Democracy and Workers'
Rights Center, Palestine

Herman Kumara
National Fisheries
Solidarity Movement,
Sri Lanka

Sandra Ratjen
International Commission
of Jurists, Switzerland

Francisco Roca
Consejo de Pueblos
Wuxhtaj, Guatemala

CC:

Mr. Mamnoon Hussain, President of Pakistan
Mr. Iqbal Ahmed Kalhoro, Acting Prosecutor General, Sindh Province
Mr. Muhammad Arshad, Director General of Human Rights
Mr. Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control
Mr. Pervaiz Rashid, Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights
Mr. Salman Aslam Butt, Attorney General
Ms. Nadia Gabol, Minister for Human Rights, Sindh Province
Mr. Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders
UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

RE: Concern about detention of human rights defender, Saeed Baloch

21 January, 2016

Your Excellency,

The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) is the largest global network of organizations and activists devoted to achieving economic, social and environmental justice through human rights, consisting of over 270 organizational and individual members in 70 countries.

We write to express our deep concern regarding the recent arrest of Saeed Baloch, a Board member of ESCR-Net and General Secretary of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), an organizational member of the Network.

According to reports received, Mr. Baloch was arrested on Saturday, January 16, 2016, and taken into custody by the paramilitary security force Rangers. He was allegedly accused of financially assisting an individual involved in organized crime and of embezzling fisheries' funds. Notwithstanding the reported lack of evidence produced to substantiate the charges against him, the wide powers granted to the Rangers in Sindh Province under the vague provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act allow for Mr. Baloch to remain detained for up to three months without formally being charged with any crime.

ESCR-Net wishes to underscore its collective appreciation of the work of Mr. Baloch, a well-recognized human rights defender and leader within the international human rights community. In addition to serving as a current member of the Board of ESCR-Net, Mr. Baloch has been a long-term leader of the PFF, a non-governmental organization working peacefully with fishers and other community members to advocate for food security and the protection of the livelihoods of small-scale fishers in Pakistan and to challenge unsustainable fishing practices using the human rights framework. Mr. Baloch has been an active champion for environmental justice,

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ESCR-Net is a project of
the Tides Center

including via the Keep Rivers Free campaign and advocacy challenging deep-sea trawlers, environmentally destructive nets, water pollution and the concentration of fishing grounds, as well as nuclear and coal power plants. In addition to his work with PFF, Mr. Baloch serves as the General Secretary of the Karachi chapter of Pakistan's Muttahida Labour Federation and is a member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, as well as of the regional human rights committee Jubilee South-APMMD, the NGO Forum on Asian Development Bank and the Asia-Europe People's Forum.

ESCR-Net condemns the apparently arbitrary arrest of Mr. Baloch and violations of his rights to freedom of expression and association. We wish to recall that Pakistan, as a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), has guaranteed the right of everyone to liberty and security of person and protection against arbitrary arrest or detention. Pakistan also has the obligation to ensure that anyone arrested or detained shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release, with the application of all fair trial guarantees including a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. Pakistan must ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for their inherent dignity.

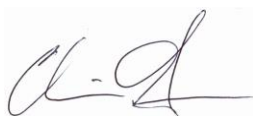
Further, we recall Pakistan's commitment to uphold the international standards established by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders, including taking all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation, adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her actions to defend and promote human rights.

Accordingly, we urgently appeal to Your Excellency to:

- 1) Launch a prompt and independent investigation into the basis behind the charges against Mr. Baloch and ensure his immediate and unconditional release, in the absence of credible evidence to support the allegations against him;
- 2) In the event that Mr. Baloch continues to be detained for any period, take immediate steps to ensure the protection of all of his rights while in custody including, among others, communication with counsel of his own choosing;
- 3) Guarantee the enjoyment of all human rights for people in Pakistan, including the rights to freedom of expression and association through, among other measures, ensuring the conformity of national legislation with the international human rights obligations accepted by Pakistan;
- 4) Take urgent steps to ensure that action taken, or restrictions imposed, by the government or its agents in connection with purported anti-terrorism operations is prescribed by law, necessary in a democratic society, and proportionate to the aim; and
- 5) Take urgent action to ensure that human rights defenders working in Pakistan enjoy, in practice, all the protections guaranteed to them by the standards of international human rights law, including, among other human rights defenders, those advocating for the social, economic, cultural and political rights of fishing communities and the protection of natural resources in Pakistan.

Finally, we respectfully request that you keep us informed of any developments in this situation.

On behalf of ESCR-Net,



Chris Grove, Director