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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

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September 22, 2010

Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani
Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Prime Minister's Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

The United States and Pakistan have embarked on a new partnership based on shared goals and shared values. The Kerry-Lugar-Berman Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act seeks not only to strengthen Pakistan's economy, but also its democracy.

It is in that spirit that I urge you to take the opportunity to demonstrate Pakistan's commitment to rule of law and a free press by ensuring that your government aggressively investigates and prosecutes those responsible for the kidnapping and torture of journalist Umar Cheema, of The News. As described in the attached report from the Committee to Protect Journalists, Mr. Cheema was allegedly abducted by men in police uniforms and warned to cease writing articles that were critical of the government.

This case is an important bellwether on two counts. First, respecting the rule of law is the bedrock of any democracy. Persons with government connections, as it appears the perpetrators of this crime may be, must not be allowed to evade punishment for their crimes.

Second, a responsible press serves as a watchdog on the government and a means for expressing differing points of view. A press that is intimidated by violence cannot serve this function, to the detriment of democracy and of the people it serves. It takes only a few acts of repression to silence many voices.

Pakistan is, I hope, entering a new phase in its economic and political development. I and many of my colleagues in the Congress believe that successful resolution of the Cheema case will be an important indicator of the progress that is being made.

Sincerely,



Richard G. Lugar
Ranking Member

Enclosure

RGL/jbm



Men in police uniforms abduct and beat Pakistani journalist

New York, September 8, 2010--The Committee to Protect Journalists calls on the Pakistani government to thoroughly investigate the kidnapping and beating of Umar Cheema, a correspondent of the English-language daily *The News* (<http://www.thenews.com.pk/>) in Islamabad. Men in police uniforms seized Cheema while he was driving in a suburb of Islamabad on Saturday, according to local and international media reports.

The well-known political reporter was held captive for more than six hours. He was dropped, bound, near his car, where he had been picked up earlier. His abductors told him to stop writing articles critical of the government, Cheema told several Pakistani papers and television stations after his release. Some reports said his captors mentioned other media outlets whose reporters would meet the same fate as Cheema.

The News published an account of what happened. "I was held in illegal captivity for six hours during which I was continuously tortured and humiliated in the nude," he said. "They stripped me out of my clothes, hung me upside down and shaved off my head and moustaches." The paper also listed [stories he had written in recent months](http://www.thenews.com.pk/05-09-2010/Top-Story/386.htm) (<http://www.thenews.com.pk/05-09-2010/Top-Story/386.htm>) that were critical of the government.

Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani [called Cheema](http://ftpapp.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=115177&Itemid=1) (http://ftpapp.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=115177&Itemid=1) to assure him the attack would be investigated.

"Pakistan's record of bringing those who would beat or kill journalists is abysmal," said Bob Dietz, CPJ's Asia program coordinator. "We ask that the prime minister's promise be carried out, and that those who tortured and sought to humiliate Umar Cheema are brought to justice. This must not become another attack that passes without consequences in Pakistan."

Pakistani authorities, including the prime minister, have told Cheema and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists that the government played no part in his abduction, according to the union.

In a [widely reprinted editorial](http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/editorial/attack-on-journalist-790) (<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/editorial/attack-on-journalist-790>), the English-language daily *Dawn* said: "No half-hearted police measures or words of consolation from the highest offices in the land will suffice in the aftermath of the brutal treatment meted out to journalist Umar Cheema of *The News*. This paper's stand is clear: the government and its intelligence agencies will be considered guilty until they can prove their innocence."

September 8, 2010 12:58 PM ET | [Permalink](http://cpj.org/2010/09/men-in-police-uniforms-abduct-and-beat-pakistani-j.php) (<http://cpj.org/2010/09/men-in-police-uniforms-abduct-and-beat-pakistani-j.php>)