

The Honourable Maxime Bernier  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A2

November 7, 2007

Dear Minister,

The recent imposition in Pakistan of a State of Emergency and the associated arrest of scores of lawyers and civil society activists involved in the defence of human rights is obviously a very troubling development. We welcomed your condemnation of that move and your insistence that the Pakistani government move to restore human rights protection in the country.

It is indeed vital that the State of Emergency be lifted, that there be an immediate return to constitutional rule and that the hundreds of people who have been arrested under these measures be released.

We are writing to highlight the case of one detainee and make a shared request that the Canadian government intervene forcefully with Pakistani authorities to secure her release.

Asma Jahangir is, without doubt, one of Pakistan's most respected and courageous human rights lawyers. Her commitment to protecting human rights in Pakistan, currently in her capacity as Chair of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan; as well as internationally, currently in her role as United Nations Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion, is inspirational by any measure. All of the signatories to this letter had the opportunity to benefit first hand from her expertise and perspective at a day-long roundtable on Human Rights and Religion jointly sponsored by Rights & Democracy and your own Department, held in Ottawa on October 22, 2007. We did not imagine at the time that the lively and engaged expert who joined us for the day would find herself under arrest back in Pakistan less than two weeks later. At the current time she is being held for ninety days under preventive detention laws in her own home, which has been declared to be a "sub-jail".

We call on you, Minister, to raise Asma Jahangir's case with your Pakistani counterpart, with a demand that she be immediately and unconditionally released, along with all other human rights defenders who have been detained under the current emergency provisions.

Sincerely,

Alex Neve  
Secretary General  
Amnesty International Canada  
Ottawa, Canada

The Honourable and Very Reverend  
Lois M. Wilson  
Former President  
World Council of Churches  
Toronto, Canada

Razmik Panossian  
Director - Policy, Programmes and  
Planning  
Rights & Democracy  
Montreal, Canada

Lloyd Lipsett  
Rights & Democracy  
Montreal, Canada

James T. Christie  
President, Canadian Council of Churches  
Dean, Faculty of Theology, University  
of Winnipeg  
Winnipeg, Canada

Angela C. Wu  
International Director  
The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty  
Washington, D.C., USA

Janet Epp Buckingham  
Director, Laurentian Leadership Centre  
Trinity Western University  
Ottawa, Canada

Rob Shropshire  
Director of Programs  
Equitas – International Centre for  
Human Rights Education  
Montreal, Canada

Malek Sitez  
Danish Institute for Human Rights  
Copenhagen, Denmark

Imam Abdul Hai Patel  
Former Ontario Human Rights  
Commissioner  
Toronto, Canada

Ian Leigh  
Professor of Law  
University of Durham, United Kingdom

Alia Hogben  
Canadian Council of Muslim Women  
Gananoque, Canada

Rabbi Dow Marmur  
Toronto, Canada

Professor Pauline Côté  
Université Laval  
Québec City, Canada

Richard Chambers  
Director  
Multi-faith Centre for Spiritual Study  
and Practice, University of Toronto  
Toronto, Canada

Salah Basalamah  
Muslim Presence Ontario and Quebec  
Ottawa, Canada

Ayesha Harji  
Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Canada

Professor Anne Saris  
Université du Québec à Montréal  
Montreal, Canada

Professor Gregory Baum  
McGill University  
Montreal, Canada

Susanne Tamas  
Bahá'í Community of Canada  
Ottawa, Canada

Jean-Francois Lesage  
Rights & Democracy  
Montreal, Canada

Nicholas Galletti  
Rights & Democracy  
Montreal, Canada

Dr. Baha Abu-Laban  
Professor Emeritus  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Canada

His Excellency Musa Javed Chohan  
High Commissioner for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan  
10 Range Road  
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 8J3

By fax: (613) 238-7296

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Your Excellency,

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We are writing to highlight the case of one detainee and make a shared request that she be immediately released. Asma Jahangir is, without doubt, one of your country's most respected and courageous human rights lawyers. Her commitment to protecting human rights in Pakistan, currently in her capacity as Chair of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan; as well as internationally, currently in her role as United Nations Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion, is inspirational by any measure.

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We call on you, Your Excellency, to raise Asma Jahangir's case with your government, and press the demand that she be immediately and unconditionally released, along with all other human rights defenders who have been detained under the current emergency provisions. We would certainly welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss this further. A meeting with a representative number of our group can be arranged by contacting Alex Neve at Amnesty International at 613 744 7667, ext 234.

Sincerely,

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Secretary General  
Amnesty International Canada  
Ottawa, Canada

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