

Pakistan: Justice for Arif Wazir, Sajid Hussain! Find Shahab Rehmat now!

International Secretariat, League for the Fifth International Sun, 03/05/2020 - 08:47

International Secretariat, League for the Fifth International

On May 1, news broke that the body of the missing Baloch journalist, Sajid Hussain, 39, had been recovered from a river in Sweden. The day before, Arif Wazir, an active member and leader of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement, the Pashtun Protection Movement, PTM, and a relative of Ali Wazir and Alamgir Wazir, was critically injured in an attack in Wanna, in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. He breathed his last on May 2 as doctors tried to save his life. Meanwhile, another Baloch student, Shahab Rahmat, has been picked up by Pakistan's spy agencies from his home in Turbat.

Hussain went missing from Uppsala in Sweden on March 2 and a case was registered with the Swedish police on March 3. The editorial board of Balochistan Times, the online paper that Hussain ran, announced his disappearance on March 28. The paper covers human rights abuses in Balochistan in English and Balochi languages. For weeks, Hussain's family withheld any public announcement of his disappearance in order not to interfere with any possible police investigation.

In his student life, Hussain was a member of the Baloch Students' Organisation. After he became a journalist, he lived in Quetta, Balochistan, and assisted Reuters for a story in 2012 when Pakistani authorities broke into his house and took away his laptop and other documents. Hussain fled to Sweden in 2017 and was granted asylum in 2019. He leaves behind his mourning wife and two children, who were planning to join him in Sweden later this year.

Different international organisations, including the Committee to Protect Journalists, have said that the disappearance of a journalist who focused on one of Pakistan's most sensitive issues, human rights in Balochistan, and who escaped Pakistan because of threats he received, is especially worrying. Activists have raised concerns that Hussain's death is a grim reminder to all asylum-seekers that no place in the world is entirely safe for them.

In February, Ahmad Waqass Goraya, a dissident blogger who was kidnapped and tortured by Pakistani authorities and later took asylum in the Netherlands, was assaulted by two men outside his house in Rotterdam. Reporters sans frontières (RSF) concluded that "everything indicates that this is an enforced disappearance" and that "if you ask yourself who would have an interest in silencing a dissident journalist, the first response would have to be the Pakistani intelligence services". The RSF further says that it has confidential information that a list of Pakistani dissidents who are now refugees in other countries is currently circulating within the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency.

Arif Wazir was attacked on April 30 by "unknown" assailants who fired at him and fled. He was first taken to a hospital in Dera Ismail Khan, and then taken to Islamabad's PIMS, where he breathed his last on May 2. Arif is the 18th family member that PTM leader Ali Wazir has lost. His father and brother were also killed

by terrorists. Arif was himself a prominent leader of the PTM who had been arrested on April 17 for making anti-Pakistan speeches during a visit to Afghanistan. He was released two days before he was attacked by unknown men.

PTM leader Mohsin Dawar says that Arif was murdered by good terrorists, hinting at the way that the Pakistani state uses some sections of the Taliban for its proxy wars. Human rights organisations and activists have raised concerns about how PTM leaders are attacked and imprisoned with impunity. Fingers are being pointed at the Pakistani state which systematically presents the popular Pashtun movement for basic democratic rights, that is, the PTM, as a movement of traitors. Last year, the Khar Qamar massacre, in which a number of PTM members were killed happened. The government again placed the blame on the PTM by accusing it of attacking a military checkpoint, after which Ali Wazir and Mohsin Dawar were jailed for four months on fabricated charges.

Meanwhile, Baloch student Rahmat has been picked up by state authorities. He is a student of philosophy at the University of Karachi and has spoken out against enforced disappearances of the Baloch people.

All of these events point towards the increasing authoritarianism of a Bonapartist state that is grappling with a deepening economic crisis. Profits are falling for the ruling class as a large section of the only force capable of creating value and thus capital, the working class, has been forced out the cities under the lockdown. This is creating an ever more difficult situation for the Pakistani ruling class that has failed to tackle the social crisis of its country. In such times, bourgeois states adopt a more reactionary character, resorting to open barbarism. Be it the attack on Arif Wazir, the Khashoggi-style killing of Sajid Hussain, the disappearance of Shahab Rahmat or the attacks of the government on the health workers, all these are examples of blatant barbarism that expose the barbaric reality of the capitalist state.

The League for the Fifth International sends internationalist solidarity to all the Baloch and PTM activists as well as the struggling workers of the health and other sectors. All these attacks underline the urgent need for the building of a united front of the workers' organisations and those of the oppressed.

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/pakistan-justice-arif-wazir-sajid-hussain-find-shahab-rehmat-now>