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SAHR STATEMENT ON THE KILLING OF SABEEN MAHMUD

South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) a regional human rights organization strongly condemns the killing of Sabeen Mahmud a Pakistani human rights activist and Director of T2F and Peace Niche and calls out to the government of Pakistan to take immediate action to ensure those responsible are brought to justice.

Sabeen Mahmud was one of the foremost human rights and free speech advocates in Pakistan. Her café T2F (The Second Floor), is a space used by Pakistani activists to conduct discussions on a variety of topics including religion, ethnicity and politics. The cafe had hosted a discussion on the situation of disappearances in Balochistan called '*Unsilencing Balochistan*' which featured prominent Baloch rights activists Mama Qadeer, Farzana Majeed and Muhammad Ali Talpur.

Earlier, a similar discussion on the topic of Balochistan presenting the same speakers at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) had been cancelled allegedly under instructions from the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI). Sabeen had been vocal in her criticism of this incident and her café had been offered to hold the same discussion. Sabeen who had been present at the discussion was returning home with her mother when she was assassinated by a group of unknown gunmen.

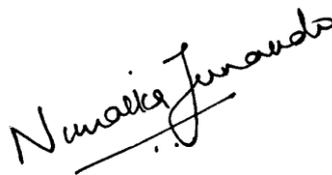
SAHR expresses its concern regarding the deteriorating culture of human rights in Pakistan with palpable threats to human rights defenders and activists. Specifically, any discussion of human rights violations in the province of Balochistan where Pakistani military are accused of brutally oppressing movements for separatism remains a sensitive topic for Pakistani authorities.

SAHR urges the government of Pakistan to ensure the protection of human rights defenders in accordance with the spirit and provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and afford them the freedom required, including the right to freedom of expression, speech, assembly and protest, to carry out valuable work to protect and promote the rights of Pakistani citizens.

SAHR urges the government to ensure justice for Sabeen Mahmud and other human rights defenders who have been threatened, disappeared or killed and to create and support an enabling environment for a dynamic national discussion on the situation of human rights in Pakistan.



Hina Jilani
Chairperson



Dr. Nimalka Fernando
Co-Chairperson

SAHR is a regional organization with a large membership base consisting of eminent and like-minded human rights activists, practitioners, experts and institutions committed to addressing human rights issues at both national and regional levels in the SAARC.