

23 January 2018

Pakistan: Violent attacks on transgender members of transgender rights organisation TransAction

Two members of Pakistani human rights organisation **TransAction Pakistan: Transgender Community Alliance** were brutally attacked in Peshawar. On 22 January 2018, trans rights activist **Shama** was sexually assaulted by nine men and on 17 January 2018, trans rights activist **Sonia** was shot and injured in Peshawar. They were both attacked for their human rights work.

[Sonia](#) and [Shama](#) are members of **TransAction Pakistan: Transgender Community Alliance**, an organisation that represents thousands of members of the transgender and intersex communities from twenty-five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA). The TransAction Pakistan strives to support transgender and intersex individuals by providing safe spaces for them. Sonia is an active transgender rights activist who regularly participates in seminars, demonstrations and walks for the rights of transgender persons. Shama is also involved in advocacy for transgender rights.

On 22 January 2018, Shama, 18, was kidnapped then sexually assaulted in the Gulbahar neighborhood of Peshawar by nine men in retaliation for her advocacy for human rights of the transgender community. The assailants threatened to shoot her if she disclosed the incident to anyone or if she participated in any more demonstrations. Shama filed a complaint with the police but so far a First Incident Report (FIR) has not been lodged, no arrests have been made and no medical examination has been conducted for Shama.

On 17 January 2018, Sonia was shot in the Pahandu area of Peshawar by her partner, who is also a member of the gang that [attacked Arzu Khan](#) and [Taimur Kamal](#), and kidnapped [Sunny](#). She was under pressure from her partner to stop her transgender rights activism, but she refused. Her partner strongly disapproved of her activities and on the day of the incident they had an argument over her human rights work. Having failed to convince Sonia to cease her activities, the defender's partner shot her in anger. Sonia was taken to Khyber Teaching Hospital with gunshot wounds to the face and a bullet lodged in her throat. Sonia is still in hospital. A First Instance Report (FIR) has been registered against the man who shot Sonia.

Cases of violent crimes against transgender people have been on the rise in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. On 26 November 2017, a transgender person was [shot and killed](#) in the city of Peshawar, the fifty-fourth transgender person killed since 2015, according to human rights defender Taimur Kamal. Previously, on 25 May 2016, transgender human rights defender [Alesha](#) died from six gunshot wounds received three days prior in front of Asia Plaza in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The police are typically reluctant to take threats seriously and it is very difficult to get cases registered with the police. Moreover, members of the TransAction Alliance regularly face [persecution](#) and [harassment](#) in connection with their human rights work.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the brutal attacks on Sonia and Shama, which it believes were motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work for the promotion and protection of transgender rights in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Front Line Defenders further expresses serious concern for the physical and psychological integrity of members of TransAction Pakistan and all

transgender human rights defenders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Pakistan to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attacks on human rights defenders Shama and Sonia, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of all members of TransAction Pakistan and other transgender human rights defenders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa;
3. Ensure that police respond promptly and competently to complaints made by transgender human rights defenders, including formally registering cases as requested;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Pakistan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.