

8 August 2017

Pakistan: Enforced disappearance of missing persons campaigner, Punhal Sario

On 3 August 2017, human rights defender **Punhal Sario** was abducted in Hyderabad, Sindh province by a dozen uniformed men and taken away in a pick-up truck. His whereabouts remain unknown.

[Punhal Sario](#) is a human rights defender and the convenor of **Voice for Missing Persons of Sindh**, a recently-formed group campaigning for the end of enforced disappearances in Sindh province, an area where many writers, students and political activists have been abducted and tortured over the years. From the 5th to the 16th of July the group led a march from Hyderabad to Karachi to protest against alleged enforced disappearances and to demand immediate action from the government. Punhal Sario also observed a week-long hunger strike outside the Karachi Press Club in July 2017.

On 3 August 2017, at around 11pm, Punhal Sario was returning from a birthday celebration with a friend when their car was stopped near the Sindhi Language Authority building in Hyderabad. According to Punhal Sario's friend, 10 to 15 men wearing police commando uniforms asked the defender to exit the vehicle, forced him into a white Toyota Vigo pick-up truck and fled the scene. Calls to the defender's phone have remained unanswered since his abduction. Punhal Sario's friends immediately informed the police and on 4 August 2017, Punhal Sario's wife, Sughra Sario, registered an initial complaint at the police station in Government Officer's Residents Colony, Hyderabad. Despite the fact that the vehicle's registration plate was recorded by Punhal Sario's friend and that the defender's phone was tracked to a specific location, police have reportedly taken no action to locate the defender.

Punhal Sario was to host a conference for missing persons in Hyderabad on 4 August, 2017. There are concerns that his abduction might be linked to this event, which took place despite the defender's disappearance. On 6 August, Sindh civil society groups staged province-wide peaceful protests against enforced disappearances.

Front Line Defenders expresses grave concern at the disappearance of human rights defender Punhal Sario, which it believes is solely motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work for human rights in Sindh province.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Pakistan to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the disappearance of human rights defender Punhal Sario, with a view to ensuring his protection and release, 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 the members of Voice for Missing Persons of Sindh;

3. 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.