



**Minister of Foreign Affairs, *Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi***  
**Minister of Interior, *Ijaz Ahmed Shah***  
**Minister of Human Rights, *Shireen Mazari***  
**Inspector General of Police, Islamabad, *Muhammad Aamir Zulfiqar Khan***

**Cc: EU delegation in Pakistan**

Brussels, 7 December 2020

**Subject: serious concerns over brutal attack against transgender rights defender Nayyab Ali and increasing attacks against the trans community generally**

Dear Ministers,  
Dear Inspector General of Police,

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, are writing to you to express our deepest concerns over the increasing killings, attempted killings, kidnappings and physical attacks against transgender rights defenders in Pakistan.

We have been alerted of a series of attacks against transgender rights defenders in the country, notably the killing of Beenish – actively involved in delivering resources to those in need during the pandemic – in end of October in Islamabad, the brutal physical attack and robbery of Nayyab Ali on 9 November in Islamabad and the kidnapping at gun point of Heera Malik in end of November.

We are particularly concerned of the chilling effect the attack against prominent transgender rights defender Nayyab Ali may produce. As Chairperson of the All Pakistan Transgender Election Network, manager of the 'Khawaja Sira Community Centre' in Okara, candidate to the 2018 general elections, 2020 Galas Award winner and leader of advocacy efforts on the National Transgender Rights Protection Policy, Nayyab Ali is an internationally recognised transgender rights defender and an empowering and inspiring voice for the trans community in Pakistan and beyond. We learnt with great worry that the attack against her followed her nomination for the APCOM Hero award for her work on transgender rights and her vocal denunciation of increased attacks against the transgender community in Pakistan on social media. The attack clearly was in reprisal for her human rights work as the unidentified assailants threatened to kill Nayyab Ali if she continued to raise her voice for victims of violence in the transgender community. We fear the brutal attack she suffered was aimed at both silencing her and silencing transgender rights defenders in the country more broadly.

We are appalled by the cruelty and gruesomeness of the killing of Beenish, kidnapping of Heera Malik, and brutal physical assault of Nayyab Ali, and are deeply disturbed by the lack of action on the part of the authorities to hold perpetrators to account. We have received information that the police only registered First Information Reports in the cases of Beenish and Nayyab Ali after intensive pressure by civil society and that no progress has yet been made on investigations in any of the above-mentioned cases.

While we welcomed the 2009 Supreme Court's judgment calling on all provincial governments to recognise the rights of transgender people, we regret that over a decade later such brutal targeting of the trans community and its defenders is allowed to happen, including in Pakistan's capital, in complete impunity.

We wish to reiterate the crucial work undertaken by transgender rights defenders in Pakistan, including by Nayyab Ali, Heera Malik, and the late Beenish, to promote respect for the rights of trans persons and for Pakistanis' human rights in general. We stand in solidarity with them and deeply regret that their lives are still endangered in Pakistan for carrying out their peaceful and human rights work.

As you know, the EU-Pakistan engagement "is to be based on the principles of the UN Charter, International norms and law,"<sup>1</sup> such principles and norms include the right to life, the protection of human rights defenders, the right to non-discrimination, the prohibition of torture, among others. You are also aware that the EU and Pakistan, as part of their Five Year Engagement, have "agree[d] to build on and expand existing cooperation on [...] enhanced Parliamentary exchanges; exchange of best practices [...] to strengthen women's empowerment." Within that framework, we stand ready to further exchange at parliamentary level on best practices to strengthen women's empowerment in Pakistan, including trans women.

**We call on the Pakistani authorities to ensure immediate, thorough and impartial investigations be carried out into the attacks against Nayyab Ali, Heera Malik, and the late Beenish, and that perpetrators be held to account. We also urge the Pakistani authorities to ensure effective protection be provided to transgender rights defenders in order to allow them to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions. We finally encourage the Pakistani authorities to ensure full implementation of the 2009 Supreme Court judgment in all parts of the country.**

Following the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, we will be requesting the EU delegation in Pakistan to follow-up on the issues raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> EU-Pakistan Five Year Engagement Plan, 2017, accessible at [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu-pakistan\\_five-year\\_engagement\\_plan.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu-pakistan_five-year_engagement_plan.pdf).

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