

## **Pakistan: Perpetrators of university attack must be swiftly brought to justice**

(Bangkok, 25 January 2016) - Perpetrators of the deadly attack on Bacha Khan University in Pakistan that resulted in at least 19 deaths and several injuries must be swiftly brought to justice, the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) said today.

Armed militants attacked the Bacha Khan University in Charsadda of north-western Pakistan on 20 January, firing indiscriminately at students, teachers, and other staff members. This attack comes just weeks after the first anniversary of the gruesome massacre of school children in a school in Peshawar, Pakistan, in December 2014 that claimed 142 lives including 132 children. The December 2014 school attacks led to strong response from the Pakistani government, including a controversial military campaign and lifting the moratorium on death penalty.

*"We condemn the shocking attack on the Bacha Khan University which is nothing but a despicable act that goes against the basic ethos of humanity,"* said Evelyn Balais-Serrano, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA. *"It is extremely painful to think this attack was perpetrated when students were remembering Bacha Khan - an iconic non-violent activist and one of the tallest Pashtun leaders of the region."*

*"We call on Pakistani authorities to swiftly bring the perpetrators to justice. However, while doing so authorities should make sure they respect international human rights and humanitarian law standards and ensure civilians are protected."*

Furthermore, FORUM-ASIA urges the Pakistani authorities to ensure that this attack is not used as an excuse to infringe or suspend basic freedoms and civil liberties. Human rights activists believe that since the six-year moratorium on the death penalty was lifted in the aftermath of the December 2014 attacks, more than 300 people have been executed in Pakistan.

Human rights activists in Pakistan have criticised the weak implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) to counter terrorism as it was never implemented in its true spirit. Among some of the chief concerns have been security centred laws under the framework of NAP which will infringe on fundamental human rights.

*"The response to barbaric attacks cannot be state brutality,"* said Evelyn Balais-Serrano. *"It has been proven time and again that the death penalty does not act as a deterrent against violent crime and usually ends up working against the weaker and poorer sections of society."*

*"The NAP has also caused a further shrinking of space for civil society organisations which has consequently had an impact on protection of human rights and the most vulnerable communities. Authorities need to balance their duty to prevent armed attacks with their responsibility to protect human rights."*

**About FORUM-ASIA:**

*FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratization.*