

**Pakistan: Ensure justice for custodial death of Aftab Ahmad**

(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 12 May 2016) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) strongly condemns the reports of torture leading to the death of Aftab Ahmad, a member of Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM). FORUM-ASIA urges the government of Pakistan to conduct a prompt, full, impartial, and independent investigation into the death and take actions against those responsible.

Aftab Ahmad, about 40 years old, was picked up by law enforcement officials in plainclothes in Karachi on 1 May 2016 and handed over to the Rangers, a Pakistani paramilitary force, on 2 May. Aftab was then sent to 90-day preventive detention under the Anti-Terrorism Act, which allows detention without trial for 90 days. He was brought to hospital in the next morning and was declared dead within minutes.

Media reported of his death on 3 May 2016, along with disturbing pictures of Aftab carrying marks of torture. According to [media reports](#) that quoted the autopsy report, the victim bore torture signs on 35 to 40 percent of his body. Major signs of torture were found on seven body parts of the victim, including his both arms and legs, head and chest. However, the reports did not explain the cause of death.

Maj. Gen. Bilal Akbar, Director General (DG), Rangers [admitted](#) that Aftab Ahmad was tortured in custody. The Rangers, however, claimed that Aftab died because of a heart attack. The Rangers [ordered](#) an inquiry into the incident.

*“Gross human rights violations have been committed time and again by the Rangers with impunity,” says Evelyn Balais-Serrano, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA. “No case has, to our knowledge, been investigated to establish accountability for the violations. This is unacceptable, and should no more be allowed to continue. It is a must that Pakistani authorities conduct credible independent investigation into the death of Aftab and hold those responsible to account.”*

[The Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997](#) (amended in 2014) violates basic human rights and fairness in trials of the accused in Pakistan. The Act permits preventive detention for 90 days without trial for “terrorist acts or other terrorism-relative offenses”. The Pakistan Rangers operates under the authority of the Act and the accused are tried under a special Anti-Terrorism Court. The Rangers are given wide discretionary powers to arrest without warrant and conduct search operations that often result in human rights violations.

FORUM-ASIA urges the Government of Pakistan to protect life and liberty of all persons and prevent torture and custodial death at any cost. The government should also review and amend predatory laws such as [The Protection of Pakistan Act, 2014](#) and [Investigation for Fair Trial Act, 2013](#) which give extraordinary and unaccountably discretionary powers to law enforcing agencies.



**About FORUM-ASIA:**

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

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