

His Excellency Musa Javed Chohan  
High Commissioner for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan  
10 Range Road  
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 8J3

By fax: (613) 238-7296

November 7, 2007

Your Excellency,

The recent imposition in Pakistan of a State of Emergency and the associated arrest of scores of lawyers and civil society activists involved in the defence of human rights is obviously a very troubling development. It is vital that the State of Emergency be lifted, that there be an immediate return to constitutional rule and that the hundreds of people who have been arrested under these measures be released.

We are writing to highlight the case of one detainee and make a shared request that she be immediately released. Asma Jahangir is, without doubt, one of your country's most respected and courageous human rights lawyers. Her commitment to protecting human rights in Pakistan, currently in her capacity as Chair of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan; as well as internationally, currently in her role as United Nations Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion, is inspirational by any measure.

All of the signatories to this letter had the opportunity to benefit first hand from her expertise and perspective at a day-long roundtable on Human Rights and Religion jointly sponsored by Rights & Democracy and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, held in Ottawa on October 22, 2007. We did not imagine at the time that the lively and engaged expert who joined us for the day would find herself under arrest back in Pakistan less than two weeks later. At the current time she is being held for ninety days under preventive detention laws in her own home, which has been declared to be a "sub-jail".

We call on you, Your Excellency, to raise Asma Jahangir's case with your government, and press the demand that she be immediately and unconditionally released, along with all other human rights defenders who have been detained under the current emergency provisions. We would certainly welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss this further. A meeting with a representative number of our group can be arranged by contacting Alex Neve at Amnesty International at 613 744 7667, ext 234.

Sincerely,

Alex Neve  
Secretary General  
Amnesty International Canada  
Ottawa, Canada

The Honourable and Very Reverend  
Lois M. Wilson  
Former President  
World Council of Churches  
Toronto, Canada

Razmik Panossian  
Director - Policy, Programmes and  
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Imam Abdul Hai Patel  
Former Ontario Human Rights  
Commissioner  
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Ian Leigh  
Professor of Law  
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Alia Hogben  
Canadian Council of Muslim Women  
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Rabbi Dow Marmur  
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Professor Pauline Côté  
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