

Testimony of Ahmad Noorani
Before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
U.S. House of Representatives

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission,

My name is Ahmad Noorani, and I live in Alexandria, Virginia. I am a proud member of the Pakistani-American diaspora and a journalist with over 15 years of experience as an investigative reporter based in Islamabad, Pakistan. Since March 2020, I have been living in exile in the United States.

My immediate family—my mother, sister, and two brothers—still resides in Islamabad, the federal capital of Pakistan.

For over a decade, I worked with Pakistan's largest media group, Geo and the Jang Group, writing for their English-language newspaper, *The News*. My reporting focused on corruption and poor governance in the public sector.

In Pakistan, the term “government” often refers not to civilian institutions, but to the country's powerful military establishment, which exercises control over nearly all key sectors—law enforcement, foreign policy, tax authorities, and more. The military also runs one of the largest business empires in the country, with investments in real estate, agriculture, and industry.

Speaking critically about the military has always been dangerous—but it became even more so in 2014, when the army reasserted open control over political affairs. I reported on this growing interference, and since then, I have faced constant threats, harassment, and physical attacks.

There have been numerous raids on my home. These incidents are too many to list here, but many are documented by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) on their website.

One of the most serious attacks occurred in October 2017, just steps away from the headquarters of Pakistan's top intelligence agency, the ISI. I was brutally assaulted and suffered severe head injuries. I barely survived—but once I recovered, I resumed my work.

In February 2019, under pressure from the military, my employer fired me. The excuse was that I had used a photo of Jamal Khashoggi as my Twitter profile picture during a state visit by Mohammad Bin Salman. Following my dismissal, I began publishing independently. My home office was later raided by ISI officials.

Eventually, I was accepted into the Scholars at Risk program at the Missouri School of Journalism. During this fellowship, I launched FactFocus, a digital platform dedicated to investigative journalism. Through it, I exposed corruption involving top generals in the Pakistan Army.

In 2022, I published an investigative report on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the then-Army Chief, revealing the enormous personal wealth accumulated by his family. In response, the government filed multiple cases against me and again raided my family home in Islamabad. Though my relatives were not arrested, the message was clear: there are consequences for exposing the truth.

Since General Asim Munir became the Army Chief, the situation has only worsened. State institutions, military, and ISI operatives have escalated their attacks—kidnapping, torturing, and even killing journalists, human rights defenders, and political activists. One of the worst recent examples was the November 26, 2024 attack on peaceful protesters outside Parliament House in Islamabad, where dozens were injured or killed. It was one of the darkest days in Pakistan's history.

Raid on My Family Home and Abduction of My Brothers

On March 17, 2025, I published a detailed investigative report exposing illegal activities involving relatives of General Asim Munir. Less than 24 hours later, at 1:05 a.m. Pakistan time on March 19, about two dozen armed men stormed my family's home in Sector I-14, Islamabad.

They demanded entry, threatening to break down the gate. When my mother refused, they began forcing their way in. Terrified, my family retreated to the upper floor and locked themselves in. Then, military officers jumped the walls, broke down the upstairs door, and forcibly entered. I was on the phone with my mother and personally heard the shouting. The officers snatched her phone, ending the call.

My younger sister recorded part of the attack, but the soldiers forced her to delete the video and confiscated one of her phones. They had no arrest warrant, no search order, and gave no explanation. My brothers were dragged outside, beaten in front of my mother, and taken away.

We later learned that Colonel Tariq, a member of General Munir's personal staff, oversaw the raid in Islamabad and an operation against my extended family in different cities. Meanwhile, in Bahawalpur, my hometown, Colonel Ahmad Bilal of Military Intelligence interrogated members of my extended family.

This was a clear case of transnational repression—a tactic used by authoritarian regimes to silence exiled dissidents by targeting their families back home. It is morally outrageous and legally indefensible.

Despite repeated legal attempts, the Islamabad Police refused to register an FIR (First Information Report). The Islamabad High Court initially refused to accept our habeas corpus petition, relenting only after pressure from journalists and lawyers. Even then, police deliberately delayed proceedings, suggesting that my family was staging the incident.

Fake Encounter and Recovery After 33 Days

After 33 days of illegal detention, on April 19, 2025, Pakistani news channels reported a “police encounter” in Punjab province. They claimed two men were rescued from “dacoits.” Those men were my brothers: Muhammad Ali and Muhammad Saif ur Rehman Haider.

[Link to report](#)

Two days later, at 5:00 a.m. on April 21, police handed my brothers back to my mother and sister. They were physically weak, mentally broken, and in tears.

They had been kept in filthy, cramped cells for weeks and were repeatedly interrogated by the Pakistan Army officers. In the last two days, they were handed over to armed men—whom they were told were “dacoits”—who tied them with ropes, staged gunfire, and threatened to kill them. They believed they would die in a fake police shootout.

They were forced to sign documents and record videos, supporting the fake story of their rescue. Before being released, they were warned: if they ever spoke out, the army would abduct them again. They have stayed silent.

The psychological trauma, especially for my younger brother Ali, is profound. He has expressed suicidal thoughts, saying he would rather die than go through it again. Even the sound of a knock terrifies him.

Both brothers refused to go outside or seek medical care due to the fear that still controls them.

Financial Repression and Life in Exile

Soon after, cases were filed against me and my family for allegedly acting “against the national interest.” All family bank accounts were frozen—including my mother's pension account, leaving them unable to meet even basic daily needs. While the FactFocus is already blocked in Pakistan, now Pakistan Army has also blocked my YouTube channel in Pakistan which is currently my major source of income.

My family is in desperate need of help. But in Pakistan, there is no justice, and internationally, our voices are often lost in larger concerns. That's why I am deeply grateful to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and the U.S. House of Representatives for giving me this opportunity to be heard.

Violation of U.S. Civil Liberties and Sovereignty

This is not just a human rights crisis—it is also a violation of my civil liberties as a U.S.-based journalist. My investigative reporting was conducted while living on U.S. soil. In response, a foreign government abducted, tortured, and threatened my family.

This is a clear case of transnational repression—and it is a direct challenge to U.S. sovereignty and the constitutional protections of free speech and press. These actions may constitute a federal crime under U.S. law, and they must be recognized and addressed accordingly.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak today. I hope this testimony brings attention to not only my family's suffering, but also to the urgent need to protect exiled journalists and dissidents from authoritarian retaliation—wherever it comes from.

What rules Pakistan today is not a government—it is a criminal cartel in uniform, a mafia wrapped in the flag, operating with total impunity under the illusion of “national security.”

Let me be direct: These are war crimes. These are crimes against humanity.

What kind of government assassinates its journalists abroad?

What kind of regime tortures critics and intimidates families on American soil?

The murder of journalist Arshad Sharif in Kenya was not a tragic error—it was a cross-border assassination, coordinated with foreign operatives to silence a voice that exposed military corruption.

Another prominent journalist, Dr. Moeed Pirzada, now in exile in the United States, has been labeled a terrorist by the Pakistani state. His family's properties have been seized. His relatives harassed. His voice attacked—because it speaks truth.

And I say this with utmost seriousness:

What Pakistan's military and intelligence networks are doing on American soil—through digital surveillance, threatening calls, blackmail, intimidation of family members, and online harassment—constitutes an attack on U.S. sovereignty.

These are not just diplomatic issues. These are federal crimes.

They violate the Civil Rights Act, the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), and the very principles of political asylum and safety that the United States promises to those fleeing tyranny.

We are witnessing transnational repression in its most aggressive form, carried out by generals wearing medals stained with the blood of their own people.

And today, that machinery of repression is being led by General Asim Munir—the current Chief of Army Staff. Under his command, the military has intensified the crackdown on dissent, criminalized

journalism, and extended the policy of abducting activists, torturing citizens, and rigging elections. He is not a reformer—he is the enforcer of a deep state that runs Pakistan like a fiefdom. From mass trials in military courts to threats against exiles living in the West, Asim Munir has accelerated every tool of tyranny. His hands are no cleaner than his predecessor's—they may be bloodier.

Let me remind this Commission:

- Former Prime Minister Imran Khan is rotting in solitary confinement on fabricated charges, while military-backed puppets rule in his place.
- Thousands of peaceful protestors remain jailed without due process.
- The Constitution has been gutted, replaced by martial law in all but name.
- Judges are coerced, blackmailed, and silenced.
- Media is crushed. X (formerly Twitter) has been banned for over a year.
- The 2024 elections were rigged in broad daylight, with altered results, mass vote theft, and military interference—engineered directly under General Asim Munir's command.

This is not democracy. It is a military dictatorship cloaked in civilian clothes, run by war criminals, mafias, and intelligence operatives who fear only one thing: the truth.

The recent protest in Washington, D.C., where hundreds of Pakistani Americans rallied against the authoritarian rule and undeclared martial law of General Asim Munir, has been met with alarming acts of transnational repression. In direct retaliation, Pakistan's military intelligence agency, ISI, has launched a campaign of intimidation targeting the families of peaceful protestors residing in the United States. These agents have harassed and threatened relatives back in Pakistan, demanding they stop their loved ones from participating in any pro-democracy activism on U.S. soil. They are forcing families to pressure their relatives to delete social media posts, hand over access to private accounts, and cease all political dissent. This is not just repression—it is a blatant attack on American values, civil liberties, and constitutional rights. When a foreign intelligence agency reaches across borders to silence voices in the United States through threats and coercion, it is an assault on U.S. sovereignty and a dangerous precedent that must not be ignored.

Mr. Chairman, Members of Congress, I plead with you—not just as a journalist—but as someone whose family was shattered, whose colleagues were assassinated, and whose homeland is being held hostage by tyranny:

1. Launch a formal congressional investigation into transnational repression by Pakistani state actors on U.S. soil.
2. Enforce Global Magnitsky Sanctions on all responsible for torture, extrajudicial killings, election rigging, and censorship—including generals like Asim Munir, ISI officials, and civilian collaborators.
3. Condition all U.S. aid, military cooperation, and financial support to Pakistan on verifiable reforms: an independent judiciary, free elections, an end to political persecution, and media freedom.
4. Publicly condemn and classify the Islamabad massacre, the killing of Arshad Sharif, and ongoing systemic torture as crimes against humanity.

This Commission bears the name of Tom Lantos, a Holocaust survivor who warned the world that, “The veneer of civilization is paper thin. We are its guardians, and we can never rest.”

Today, I ask you not to rest.

Stand with truth. Stand with justice. Stand with the people of Pakistan.

And tell the tyrants: Your crimes will not go unpunished.

Thank you.

Condemnation by International Organizations

International organizations have already recognized and reported on this incident:

- Amnesty International:
<https://x.com/amnestysasia/status/1902326181820842331>
- Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ):
<https://cpj.org/2025/03/exiled-pakistani-journalists-brothers-abducted-another-journalist-disappears/>
- Reporters Without Borders (RSF):
<https://rsf.org/en/pakistan-rsf-demands-immediate-release-journalist-ahmad-noorani-s-brothers-forcibly-disappeared>
- TrialWatch to Monitor Proceedings:
<https://cfj.org/news/trialwatch-to-monitor-proceedings-against-pakistani-journalist-ahmad-noorani/>
- Blocking of YouTube Channel in Pakistan
<https://cpj.org/2025/05/pakistani-journalists-youtube-channel-blocked-under-investigation-in-drive-against-exiled-media/>

Reporting of the Incident And Court Proceedings in Pakistani Media

Pakistan’s largest English newspapers Daily Dawn covered the incident of forced disappearance and court coverage as follows:

- March 19, 2025:
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1898954>
- March 25, 2025:
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1900173>
- March 27, 2025:
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1900640>