

January 27, 2016

Honorable John Kerry, Secretary of State
U.S. State Department
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Honorable Secretary Kerry,

The undersigned organizations and individuals condemn the unjust arrest of Saeed Baloch by paramilitary forces in Pakistan. We demand his immediate release. If the government of Pakistan refuses, we request an explanation as to the charges brought against him and a warrant for his arrest. In that case, Mr. Baloch must receive due process of law and be brought to a civilian court in the presence of a judge with witnesses. He must receive legal counsel of his choice and have regular contact with his lawyers and family.

Since the 1980's, Mr. Saeed Baloch has been an ardent human rights activist, labor unionist and movement leader. He is the Secretary General of the Fishermen's Cooperative Society (FCS) in Karachi and of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), which protects the socioeconomic and political rights of indigenous fishing communities in Pakistan and maintains more than 70,000 members. Mr. Baloch is also a senior member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

On January 16, 2016, he was taken into custody for questioning by the Pakistan Rangers who work under the command of the Pakistan Army. Since then, he has been detained without clear charges or evidence of wrongdoing. Civil society organizations in Pakistan have launched a petition with the Sindh High Court and have requested a meeting with Director General of the Rangers.

To date, there is still no arrest warrant; he has not been to court; and, both the charges against him and the reason for detention have not been made public. Additionally, Mr. Baloch has not seen his family or legal advisors and is being held at an undisclosed location. This is a violation of his basic human rights.

We urgently request that the U.S. State Department investigate this situation and pressure the Pakistani government to immediately release Mr. Baloch. If the government of Pakistan wants to bring charges against him, they must follow due process of law and uphold human rights.

Sincerely Yours,

Community to Community; Bellingham, Washington
Family Farm Defenders; Madison, Wisconsin
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy; Minneapolis, Minnesota
Institute for Policy Studies; Washington, DC

National Family Farm Coalition; Washington, DC
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance; Gloucester, Massachusetts
Soil Generation; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
United States Food Sovereignty Alliance
Voices for Earth Justice; Southfield, Michigan
WhyHunger; New York, New York
Andrianna Natsoulas, Food Voices; Las Cruces, New Mexico
Philip McMichael, Professor, Cornell University; Ithaca, New York
Wendy Wolford, Professor, Cornell University; Ithaca, New York

Cc:

Under Secretary Sarah Sewall, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights
Ambassador, H.E. Mr. Jalil Abbas Jilani, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the United States of America