

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4838>



Pakistan

Protests to continue if social media activists are not released

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Sunday 22 January 2017

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

Over 200 activists associated with civil society organizations and political parties held a demonstration on Thursday outside the Lahore Press Club to call for the release of five social media activists who were abducted in the last week.

The abducted activists, include Islamabad-based academic and poet Salman Haider, social activist Samar Abbas, social media bloggers Aasim Saaed, Waqas Goraya and Ahmed Raza Naseer.

The joint platform demanded that the government needs to ensure the release of civil society and progressive political activists.

They raised concerns that it was state agencies that were behind the expansion of a campaign against secular and left-wing social media activists.

They asked Interior Minister Nisar Ali Khan to fulfill his promise of tracking down who abducted the activists and ensuring their release.

Awami Workers Party (AWP) spokesperson Farooq Tariq said that protests will continue until the missing persons were returned and the crackdown against social media activists was stopped.

He said that the NAP was being used to crack down against progressive activists.

He said that another demonstration would be held on Thursday, January 19, in Lahore if the abducted activists are not released by then.

Diep Syeda, a social activist, said that it was against the laws of the country and its constitution to abduct people.

She said that intelligence and law enforcement agencies can still not be absolved of their responsibility to uphold their constitutional duty of protecting the right to life and safety of these missing activists.

She called on media to fulfill its duty in reporting the unlawful abduction of social media activists.

Nighat Dad from the Digital Rights Foundation said that the concerns raised when the Cyber Crimes Law was passed last year that human rights activists would come under threat are coming true.

She said that it was important to protect freedom of speech on the internet.

The protest was joined by Awami Workers Party, Digital Rights Foundation, Democratic Students Alliance, Institute for Peace and Secular Studies, Progressive Students Collective, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, National Trade Union Federation, The Feminist Collective, Women's Action Forum, Punjab Urban Resource Centre, Punjab Lok Sangat, Rawadari Tehreek and Progressive Labour Foundation among others.

January 12