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## **Pakistan: Women human rights defenders Sasui Lohar and Sorath Lohar's father killed in Sindh Province**

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killing on 16 February 2024 of Hidayat Lohar, the father of women human rights defenders **Sasui Lohar** and **Sorath Lohar**. The two women human rights defenders have been campaigning ever since for justice in his case and for the state to conduct an effective and impartial inquiry into his assassination. Hidayat Lohar was killed by unidentified men in his home town of Nasirabad, near Larkana City, Sindh Province of Pakistan. Hidayat Lohar, a teacher and dissident, has faced reprisals due to his political views and also linked to the human rights work of his daughters, Sasui Lohar and Sorath Lohar. The women human rights defenders are the founders of Voice of Missing Persons of Sindh, which campaigns for an end to violations including extra judicial killings and enforced disappearances in Sindh Province. For 16 days following his killing, the police refused to file a First Information Report (FIR), despite repeated requests and campaigns by the family. On 2 March 2024, following an order by the Additional Sessions Judge, Kamber District, the Nasirabad police have registered an FIR in the case but have failed to take any effective steps to trace those responsible.

[Sasui Lohar](#) and [Sorath Lohar](#) are the founders of the Voice of Missing Persons of Sindh, an organization aimed at supporting victims of enforced disappearances and their families to seek justice. Their human rights work is motivated by their own experience when their father Hidayat Lohar was forcibly disappeared in 2017 and continued following his release in 2019. The women human rights defenders have been active since 2014 supporting other victims and families to seek redress and to end the crime of enforced disappearances in Sindh.

On 16 February, Hidayat Lohar was assassinated by two unidentified gunmen who shot him while he was traveling to work. The attack happened very close to the police station in Nasirabad and police have confirmed to the family that they heard the sound of gunfire. However, the police and state authorities have so far failed to take any effective measures to respond to the killing or trace those responsible. For over two weeks following the killing, Nasirabad police refused to register a FIR despite the requests of family members. The two women human rights defenders, Sasui Lohar and Sorath Lohar, launched a protest campaign seeking justice and calling on the police to take action and register the FIR into the killing of their father. Three days after the killing, they marched peacefully in Nasirabad town calling for justice. Instead of tracing the perpetrators, the police appear to have focused their attention on the women human rights defenders and their campaign – intimidating protesters and the family with a heavy police presence and refusing to accede to demands for justice and accountability. The FIR bearing number 32/24 was only registered by Nasirabad police 16 days later, on 2 March 2024, following an order by the Additional Sessions Judge, Kamber District directing the police to file an FIR and commence inquiry. However, no further action has been taken to date to identify those responsible.

Sasui Lohar and Sorath Lohar have faced repeated reprisals including legal persecution, surveillance, threats and harassment linked to their work. Their father has also been targeted as a result of their work. On 3 April 2023, Hidayat Lohar was taken from his relatives shop in Nasirabad by the Station House Officer (SHO) of Nasirabad police station. When the woman human rights defender Sasui Lohar went to police station inquiring about the whereabouts of Hidayat Lohar, police denied having any information about his whereabouts despite witness statements that clearly state

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that Hidayat Lohar was taken away by the SHO of Nasirabad Police. Sasui Lohar began a sit-in protest at the police station demanding that her father's whereabouts be revealed and calling for his release. Around three hours after he was first taken, Hidayat Lohar was returned to his family by the SHO at a location in Larkana city which is around 40 minutes away from Nasirabad town. There was no formal arrest receipt or explanation to the family regarding his abduction or reason for detention by the SHO. Hidayat Lohar informed his daughter that after he was taken away by the SHO, he was blindfolded and handed over to unidentified persons who he believed were intelligence agents who held him at an unknown location and questioned him about his daughters' human rights work and warned them to stop the campaigns on enforced disappearances.

Sasui Lohar and Sorath Lohar have also faced legal persecution and false labeling by the state including the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD). On 17 January 2022, an FIR was filed by the SHO in Shashar against the two women human rights defenders together with several other human rights defenders accusing them of being anti-national and acting against the interest of the state. This case has since been closed due to lack of evidence. The CTD has falsely accused Sorath Lohar of receiving foreign funds for her organization, allegations the woman human rights defender denies. The abuse of anti-terror mechanisms and false labeling and legal cases against human rights defenders reflects a common pattern of reprisals in Pakistan, including restrictions on receipt of funds or resources for legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders condemns the killing of Hidayat Lohar which we believe is a reprisal against the human rights work carried out by his daughters, Sasui Lohar and Sorath Lohar. Pakistani human rights defenders work in an extremely hostile context and there is evidence of state authorities or state supported groups targeting not only human rights defenders but also their families as a form of punishment and to silence their voices. We call on the Pakistan police and state authorities to ensure an effective and independent inquiry that results in the prosecution of those responsible for the killing of Hidayat Lohar. Front Line Defenders stands in solidarity with Sasui Lohar and Sorath Lohar and call on the Pakistan state to ensure their safety, protection and an end to reprisals against the women human rights defenders and their family.