



**Press Release:**

**Pak Dalit Network demands arrest of the killers of the Mirpurkhas Christian worker**

KARACHI, July 10, 2012: the Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network (PDSN) has expressed serious concern over the brutal killing of a 26-year-old Christian worker Asif Masih in Mirpur Khas. The victim was reportedly dragged and later killed after receiving five gun shots by the henchmen of an influential landlord Faisal Kachelo of the area.

In a statement here on Tuesday, PDSN, a network of over 20 civil society organizations, condemned the incident and deplored that the police have still not arrested the main accused, Faisal Kachelo, despite protests by Asif Masih's relatives. Ditto Masih, father of the deceased has alleged that police were trying to give the main accused (Faisal Kachelo) a free passage by not arresting him, instead they have only arrested his bodyguard.

Influential people of the area and police have also jumped in to save the skin of Kachelo. Instead of arresting the accused police have resorted to its usual high handedness and threatened the relatives of the deceased to end their protests. Masih was the only breadwinner of his family which comprises his parents and, young brothers and a sister. He was working with a local NGO. Masih was killed over a petty dispute pertaining to some bags of sand as a construction material.

"We condemn the brutal act of landlord and call upon the district police, the government of Sindh, the Home Department, and the Inspector General Police, Sindh to immediately arrest the murderer and bring him in the court of law including extending punishment to him in accordance with the law," the statement says.

This brutal act is in violation of the Constitution of Pakistan and the international conventions, which guarantee the rights of the non Muslim citizens as equal citizens of Pakistan and extend them all fundamental and constitutional rights this country's Muslim population enjoys. The state, recent years, has completely failed in providing security to the non-Muslim community of the country. "We also demand the government of Pakistan and the provincial government Sindh to ensure safety and security of non-Muslims, particularly in the Sindh province."

Pakistan's Christian and Hindus particularly scheduled castes population which are considered "low caste" instead of being protected, is often victimized being treated as second class citizens. Majority of them are living in abject poverty, and low access to fundamental provisions such as education, health and employment opportunities. The non-Muslims are vulnerable to threats of landed elite in rural areas as they are lacking the means to defend themselves. They are also the inevitable targets of religious fanatics, powerful landlords and face social discrimination because of their religious beliefs.

Ends