

RESPONSE TO TERRORIST ATTACK ON LAWYERS IN MARDAN, PAKISTAN

LAWASIA condemns the terrorist attack on the District Court in Mardan, Pakistan on 2 September 2016 and which cost the lives of 12 people, including 3 lawyers and 2 policemen.

LAWASIA notes that responsibility for the attack was claimed by Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, the same Taliban faction which claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack in Quetta, Pakistan, on 16 August 2016 and which claimed the lives of 18 lawyers.

The events in Mardan again indicate that members of the legal profession are specifically and repeatedly targeted by terrorists due to the professional activities they undertake and the public role they play towards upholding the rule of law.

LAWASIA considers any assault on members of the profession to be a direct affront to the rule of law and the administration of justice. The right of members of the profession to perform their professional functions is fundamental to our system of justice, the practise of law and the protection of the community.

LAWASIA endorses the reported comments of Amir Hussain, president of the Mardan Bar Association, who observed that lawyers have come under attack in Pakistan because they are "an important part of democracy".

Members of the profession throughout the Asia Pacific region, and elsewhere, are deeply saddened and dismayed by the events in Mardan, as in the case of Quetta.

LAWASIA draws attention to Articles 16 and 17 of the *UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*, which state:

16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

17. Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

LAWASIA expresses its support for the legal community of Pakistan, which has always shown admirable courage and resilience in the face of dire crisis and challenge.

In this context, it urges the Pakistani authorities to bring those responsible to justice and to ensure an appropriate level of security for members of the legal profession in accordance with Article 17 of the *Basic Principles*.

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