

**Press Release - For Immediate Release**

**Over 100 women journalists and allies release public statement condemning the removal of Hamid Mir from the airwaves and express solidarity with all journalists facing pressure**

**Islamabad, 4 June 2021:** A group of 147 women journalists and allies have released a public statement condemning the removal of Hamid Mir from the airwaves and demanding that the government take appropriate measures to ensure that the media does not have to face such immense pressures for merely doing its job.

The full statement states that the endorsees are “deeply disturbed with the decision to remove Hamid Mir from his flagship show *Capital Talk*, a mere 72 hours after he spoke at a protest organised by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) on Friday, May 28 in condemnation of the attack on Asad Ali Toor, who was brutally tortured in his home on Tuesday, May 25”. It goes on to express alarm about the “at the sharp escalation of direct, indirect and covert actions against journalists, which are having a detrimental and silencing effect on news media in Pakistan”. Expressing support with Hamid Mir and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, the statement reiterates the union's demand that “journalists must be allowed to perform their work independently and without intimidation; journalists must be protected from attacks in reprisal for their work; and perpetrators of attacks on journalists, including those who assaulted Mr Toor, must be held accountable”.

The endorsees express the concern that the decision to remove Hamid Mir from airwaves, while he also faces a continuous hate campaign online, can “create a damaging cascading effect, effectively intimidating others who stand up against continued attacks on media to self-censor or to be pressured into silence by their employers”. The endorsees have called upon fellow journalists, press clubs, media houses, and trade unions to form a united front to call for Mr Mir's reinstatement and “to ensure that no other media worker is temporarily or permanently removed from their professional duties without due process”.

The women journalists' statement takes note of the increasingly regressive approach to media and demands “that the federal and provincial governments take immediate notice of attacks on journalists, bring the perpetrators to justice, and make their investigation reports public”. The statement comes at a time where media and journalists bodies and allies like Journalist Defense Committee and Supreme Court Bar association are also publicly condemning different incidents of intimidation, attacks and regulatory threats to media. After the statement was drafted a frivolous lawsuit was also initiated against Hamid Mir and senior journalist Asma Shirazi. The organisers of the petition also stand with Asma Shirazi and strongly condemn the use of such tactics to use law as a way to intimidate journalists into silence.

The full statement is available [here](#) and is copied below.

---ENDS---

The statement is open for further endorsements till 6th June 2021. To add your name to the petition, please click [here](#).

## Full statement

### **Women journalists, colleagues and allies condemn the removal of Hamid Mir from the airwaves, express solidarity with all journalists facing intense pressure to remain silent**

We, the undersigned, are deeply disturbed with the decision to remove Hamid Mir from his flagship show *Capital Talk*, a mere 72 hours after he spoke at a protest organised by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) on Friday, May 28 in condemnation of the attack on Asad Ali Toor, who was brutally tortured in his home on Tuesday, May 25. We express our alarm at the sharp escalation of direct, indirect and covert actions against journalists, which are having a detrimental and silencing effect on news media in Pakistan.

We stand in support of Mr Mir, who has fearlessly continued to raise his voice against attacks on the press and has expressed bold criticism of the powerful (military) establishment often accused of controlling the public's access to information. We stand in solidarity with the PFUJ and all the journalists who participated in Friday's protest to exercise their constitutional right to freedom of speech and of assembly, and we reiterate their demands: journalists must be allowed to perform their work independently and without intimidation; journalists must be protected from attacks in reprisal for their work; and perpetrators of attacks on journalists, including those who assaulted Mr Toor, must be held accountable.

The attack on Mr Toor is not an isolated incident. Rather, it indicates a pattern of threats and attacks against him and other journalists in Pakistan to silence independent and critical reporting, and undermine the public's right to information. This pattern is reflected in the fact that Pakistan's ranking in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index has fallen by six places since 2018. News organisations in Pakistan operate under tremendous pressures from the authorities and other powerful groups. These pressures manifest in various forms, including censorship through draconian regulations, threat of legal action, financial strangulation, online abuse, verbal intimidation and physical attacks.

Mr Mir's removal from the airwaves must also be seen in this context. It is condemnable that journalists who speak up for theirs and others' rights are forced to face such pressures, smears and attacks, including both incitement to and actual violence. We are concerned that, rather than stand by him against a sustained and orchestrated hate campaign, Geo's response was to take him off air. This decision will create a damaging cascading effect, effectively intimidating others who stand up against continued attacks on media to self-censor or to be pressured into silence by their employers. We therefore call upon our fellow journalists, press clubs, media houses, and trade unions to form a united front to call for Mr Mir's reinstatement as host of *Capital Talk* and to ensure that no other media worker is temporarily or permanently removed from their professional duties without due process.

Moreover, we demand that the government take appropriate measures to ensure that the media does not have to face such immense pressures for merely doing its job. We remind the government that a robust and independent press is essential for democratic and political progress. We remain extremely concerned that the government's attitude to continued attacks on journalists is dismissive at best and relies on victim blaming at worst, as demonstrated by Federal Minister Fawad Chaudhry's allegation that journalists 'use' such threats and attacks to get political asylum abroad during his appearance on BBC's *HardTalk*.

We also wish to make it clear that these incidents have taken place at a time when a journalists' protection bill has been introduced in the National Assembly, and when the Sindh Assembly has passed a law to ensure journalists' safety. We would like to remind the federal and provincial authorities that laws are only as effective as their implementation, and that journalists' safety cannot be assured unless a progressive attitude towards freedom of speech and expression, right to information, and public transparency and accountability is also reflected by the political class and in other legislations, including current and potentially future media and social media regulations. We demand that the federal and provincial governments take immediate notice of attacks on journalists, bring the perpetrators to justice, and make their investigation reports public.

**Undersigned,**

**WOMEN JOURNALISTS**

- |                         |                       |                           |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Amber Rahim Shamsi   | 22. Asma Shirazi      | 42. Fauzia Shahid         |
| 2. Munizae Jahangir     | 23. Aimun Faisal      | 43. Aneela Ashraf         |
| 3. Sadaf Khan           | 24. Tanzeela Mazhar   | 44. Faiza Shah            |
| 4. Farieha Aziz         | Mehreen Zahra-Malik   | 45. Sahar Habib Ghazi     |
| 5. Reem Khurshid        | 25. Nasim Zehra       | 46. Sabahat Khan          |
| 6. Ayesha Khalid        | 26. Laiba Zainab      | 47. Beenish Javed         |
| 7. Kiran Nazish         | 27. Rabia Mushtaq     | 48. Maha Anwar            |
| 8. Damla Tarhan         | 28. Tehreem Azeem     | 49. Sana Khalid           |
| 9. Ceren Iskit          | 29. Naziha Syed Ali   | 50. Sumaira Ashraf Rajput |
| 10. Asma Shirazi        | 30. Lubna Jerar Naqvi | 51. Beena Sarwar          |
| 11. Aimun Faisal        | 31. Ailia Zehra       | 52. Anis Haroon           |
| 12. Tanzeela Mazhar     | 32. Amel Ghani        | 53. Batool Seema          |
| 13. Mehreen Zahra-Malik | 33. Annie Shirazi     | 54. Annam Lodhi           |
| 14. Nasim Zehra         | 34. Najia Ashar       | 55. Rabab Zehra           |
| 15. Laiba Zainab        | 35. Haya Fatima Iqbal | 56. Fatima Zaidi          |
| 16. Farieha Aziz        | 36. Saher Baloch      | 57. Azaad Ali             |
| 17. Reem Khurshid       | 37. Afia Salam        | 58. Virsa Pirzado         |
| 18. Ayesha Khalid       | 38. Momina Mindeel    |                           |
| 19. Kiran Nazish        | 39. Xari Jalil        |                           |
| 20. Damla Tarhan        | 40. Fatima Razzaq     |                           |
| 21. Ceren Iskit         | 41. Batul Rajput      |                           |

## ALLIES AND MALE JOURNALISTS

1. Nighat Dad
2. Maleeha Mengal
3. Hija Kamran
4. Zoya Rehman
5. Ramsha Afaq
6. Mahar Safdar Ali
7. Rubina Saigol
8. Mahnaz Rahman
9. Tahira Abdullah
10. Naazish Ata-Ullahu
11. Humaira Masihuddin
12. Marziya Farooq
13. Ismat Shahjahan
14. Priyanka
15. Anam Rathor
16. Qurat Mirza
17. Farman Ali, AWP/Dawn
18. Moin Ali (PrSF)
19. Zain Ul Abdin
20. Azhar Ali
21. Farman Baig
22. Muhib Ali
23. Saadia Malik
24. Azhar Chandio
25. Kambho Khan Umrani
26. Qamar Ramay
27. Bella
28. Sarah
29. Zahid Hussain
30. Sarah Ahmed
31. Rafia Gulani
32. Saadia Amjad
33. Sadia Ahmed
34. Ghausia Rashid
35. Moosa Eleazar
36. Alia Malik
37. Khawar Mumtaz
38. Nida Aly
39. Zainab Sohail
40. Farzana Bari
41. Faiza
42. Hafza
43. Marvi
44. Sadaf Khatoon
45. Muhammad Nasir
46. Sheema Kermani
47. Sarmad Samejo
48. Waheed Ali Solangi
49. Shizza Malik
50. Darya Khan Chandio
51. Hafeez Umrani
52. Sana Isa
53. Jaleel Ahmed
54. Jaleel Agha
55. Sarah Qazi
56. سانول ٹیپو
57. Rahmat Tunio
58. Matiullah Jan
59. Naheed Aziz
60. Zubairb Shah Agha
61. Nighat Said Khan
62. Noreen Nazir
63. Muntaha Tariq
64. Suraya
65. Safina Javed
66. Naima Qamar
67. Benazir Jatoti
68. Sasui
69. Kashmala Wazir
70. Aliza Mehfooz
71. Beenish Zia
72. A.H. Nayyar
73. Adv. Nazir Sultan Maken
74. Iqra
75. Ali Ghulam
76. Iqra
77. Engr. Haiderzaman (AWP)
78. Qamar Ramay
79. Jehanzeb Soomro
80. Darya Khan Chandio
81. Hafeez Umrani
82. Kambho Khan Umrani
83. Dr Eshwer Kumar
84. Kamran
85. Anam Rathor
86. Nida Tanweer
87. Zulfiqar Kadri
88. Haseem uz Zaman
89. Farooq Tariq