



**Human Rights Commission  
of Pakistan**

Press release

**Protesting against enforced disappearances is not a crime**

*Lahore, 10 May 2019.* The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has said that 'the recent sit-in by the Shia Missing Persons Relatives Committee in hopes of finding out what has happened to their family members has not produced a satisfactory response on the part of the state.' HRCP has also expressed its support for the families of missing persons from Karachi's Shia community, and said that, 'Foremost is the right to due process. While the police have claimed that five of the missing people were arrested on suspicion of 'anti-state activities, the Committee's rejoinder, that the people in question are innocent of these charges, must be investigated fairly and transparently.

'HRCP is alarmed by the crackdown against relatives of missing persons, in which at least 36 people were arrested on a wide range of charges from 'rioting' to 'waging war against Pakistan.' Although many have since been released, these remain absurd charges, given that the protestors had the right to assemble to demand the recovery of their loved ones. That this avenue of protest against enforced disappearances should meet with suspicion and harassment on the part of the state is a distressing development.

'Above all, this still leaves the fate of numerous others from the Shia community – and indeed, from other communities and regions – unknown. Once again, HRCP urges the state not to delay the criminalisation of enforced disappearances, to which it has publicly committed, and to take all civil society stakeholders on board when doing so.'

**Dr. Mehdi Hasan**

Chairperson