



Interview with Mr. Munawar Sufi Laghari: Advocating for Sindhi Human Rights

GHRD: Today, we have the honor of speaking with Mr. Munawar Sufi Laghari, the Executive Director of the Sindhi Foundation, a Washington-based organization dedicated to advocating for human rights, particularly within Pakistan's Sindh province. Mr. Laghari, a Sufi at heart and a lifelong human rights activist leads efforts to address issues such as the abduction and forced conversion of Sindhi Hindu girls, exemplified by the case of Priya Kumari. His work with the Sindhi Foundation highlights the ongoing struggle for justice and protection of religious minorities in Pakistan. We are grateful to have Mr. Laghari with us today to shed light on these critical issues and share his insights. Welcome, Mr. Laghari!

Could you tell us more about the case of Priya Kumari and the efforts her family has made to find her?

Mr. Laghari: Priya Kumari, a seven-year-old Sindhi Hindu girl, was kidnapped in Sangrar, a small village on the Sindh border with India. On August 19, 2021, at 3:00 pm, Priya went missing. She was with her father, Raj Kumar, who runs a retail store. During the festival of Muharram, Priya was helping her father distribute water and Sabeel (Sweet Sharbat) to mourners. Her father went home briefly, and when he returned, Priya was gone. There were no mobile phone services or public transport available, and no CCTV cameras in the village.

Priya's father registered the case on August 22, 2021, but no clues have been found. The police have investigated extensively, detaining over 1,000 people, conducting DNA tests on 22 individuals, and searching 300 houses. Despite these efforts, almost three years have passed, and Priya's parents, Raj Kumar and Veena Kumari, continue their search. Recently, they moved to Sukkur city in Sindh, hoping for better opportunities to find their daughter. Priya's abduction is a unique and unprecedented crime in Sindh's history.

What are the main goals of the march that will take place in London on June 14?

Mr. Laghari: The main goals of the march are to bring international awareness to Priya Kumari's case, put pressure on the Pakistani government, and garner support and solidarity from the international community for the Sindhi people.

How do you assess the response of the Pakistani authorities regarding Priya Kumari's disappearance?

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Mr. Laghari: Pakistani authorities always lie and give false hope to the Sindhi people. If there is pressure on them, either from inside or outside, then it's possible we can get a desirable solution.

Could you explain what the memorandums that will be presented to the UK government and the Pakistani High Commission are? What actions does the Sindhi Foundation expect from the UK government and the Pakistani High Commission after presenting the memorandums?

Mr. Laghari: The memorandum contains facts and figures of the case, requesting the Prime Minister to use his influence to secure Priya's release. We acknowledge and appreciate the UK's commitment to human rights and justice globally. Our call to the UK government is purely on humanitarian grounds.

To Pakistan's authorities, our memorandum is a strong note of protest and a reminder of the inaction regarding Priya Kumari's case. Through the High Commissioner, we continually urge the Pakistani government to bring Priya home safely and without further delay.

Could you give us an idea of the magnitude of the acts of abductions and forced conversions of Sindhi Hindu girls?

Mr. Laghari: The magnitude is disproportionate. Young Sindhi Hindu girls and women, aged from 13 to 40 years, are forcibly abducted and converted to Islam daily. More than 200 girls go missing each year in Sindh, and many cases go unreported.

What are the biggest challenges the Sindhi Foundation faces in trying to defend Sindhi rights in Pakistan?

Mr. Laghari: The challenges are enormous. We struggle to get volunteers due to fear of repercussions from intelligence agencies. Many political activists have disappeared or been murdered. Personally, my family has suffered greatly. My brother was murdered, and his son was poisoned by intelligence agencies. Additionally, we face a severe shortage of funds to run our projects or initiate new human rights and cultural programs.

How can the international community more effectively support the cause of Sindhis who are victims of abductions and forced conversions?

Mr. Laghari: The international community should support the Sindhi Foundation morally, materially, and financially. They should amplify our voices in humanitarian groups and provide a platform for the voiceless Sindhi people.

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What immediate measures do you believe the Pakistani government should take to protect religious minorities and their children?

Mr. Laghari: The Pakistani government must stop supporting religious extremism and revise the school syllabus to eliminate hatred against religious minorities. They should abolish draconian blasphemy laws and promote a secular state rather than a militarized one.

What are the next steps for the Sindhi Foundation after this march? Are there other initiatives planned to raise awareness and seek justice for the victims?

Mr. Laghari: Our next steps include raising our voices and staging rallies and marches in global power corridors.

How can people help in the cause of Priya Kumari and other girls in similar situations?

Mr. Laghari: People can send postcards or email messages to Pakistani authorities demanding Priya's immediate return. They can support the Sindhi Foundation's causes and express solidarity with Priya's parents. Protests in front of Pakistani diplomatic missions worldwide can also raise awareness and show solidarity.

Have there been any engagements or responses from international bodies like the UN regarding the case of Priya Kumari and the broader issue of abductions and forced conversions of Sindhi Hindu girls?

Mr. Laghari: Yes, we have received some support, though not as much as needed. We have organized long marches and awareness campaigns in cities like Paris, London, Toronto, Ottawa, New York, and Washington DC to highlight these atrocities.

What concrete actions would you like to see from international entities, such as the UN, to help recover Priya Kumari and address the issue of forced conversions in Sindh?

Mr. Laghari: The UN should issue an urgent alert about Priya's case, urging the Pakistani government for her immediate release. They should actively work against abductions and forced conversions of Sindhi Hindu girls and send a fact-finding mission to Pakistan to investigate these issues.

GHRD: Mr. Laghari, thank you very much for sharing your perspectives and information with us today. Your work is extremely important, and we wish you continued success in your efforts to bring justice to Priya Kumari and other girls in similar situations. We encourage all

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viewers who share our concerns for human rights and justice to sign our online petition to bring accountability and justice to people in Pakistan.

SIGN THE PETITION: <https://chnng.it/DVm9GC8Ybn>

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