

# **Target Killings of Baloch Intellectuals: A Systematic Erasure of Identity and Resistance**

**Editorial**

## **Introduction**

The ongoing targeted killings of Baloch intellectuals represent a grave injustice that seeks to dismantle the cultural and intellectual fabric of the Baloch nation. These actions, perpetrated by Pakistani state forces and their affiliates, have escalated over the years, leading to a climate of fear and oppression in Balochistan. As an organisation advocating for independence, we have witnessed firsthand the systematic efforts to silence our voices, erase our identity, and suppress our struggle for self-determination and independence. This editorial aims to shed light on the atrocities committed against the Baloch people, particularly intellectuals, and to call for urgent global intervention.

## **The Systematic Targeting of Intellectuals**

Intellectuals serve as the torchbearers of cultural identity and historical consciousness. In Balochistan, they have become prime targets for elimination, as their work threatens the state's attempts to erase Baloch identity.

Over the years, numerous Baloch intellectuals have been assassinated or forcibly disappeared, with little to no accountability.

One of the most notable examples is Professor Saba Dashtyari, a revered academic at the University of Balochistan, who dedicated his life to promoting Balochi literature and history. His assassination in 2011 sent a chilling message to scholars and activists: speaking up for Baloch rights is a death sentence.

Dashtyari was not just an academic; he was a revolutionary figure whose work challenged the state's narrative and provided a platform for Baloch voices. Similarly, the abduction and extrajudicial killing of Ghulam Mohammed Baloch, chairman of the Baloch National Movement, along with his associates Lala Munir Baloch and Sher Mohammed Baloch in 2009, underscored the extent of state brutality. Their deaths were a direct attack on the political leadership of the Baloch independence movement, aiming to instill fear and dismantle organized resistance.

More recently, the murder of Allah Dad Baloch, a postgraduate and MPhil scholar, further illustrates the ongoing nature of this systematic violence. Allah Dad was an academically gifted individual committed to uplifting the Baloch community through education. His assassination at the hands of state-backed death squads is

yet another grim reminder of the dangerous environment that intellectuals and activists operate in.

Zakria Zaheer Baloch, another victim of targeted killing, had been twice abducted by Pakistani forces and later released. Recently, he became a victim of targeted killing in Gwadar, allegedly carried out by Pakistani state agencies. His repeated abductions and eventual assassination highlight the brutal tactics employed by the state to silence voices advocating for Baloch rights. His murder has once again fueled outrage and underscored the ongoing climate of fear and persecution faced by Baloch people.

### **Enforced Disappearances and Extrajudicial Killings**

The phenomenon of enforced disappearances has become a defining feature of state repression in Balochistan. Individuals are abducted, often in broad daylight, by security forces or their affiliated groups, only to be found later in mass graves or never found at all. Families of the disappeared are left in perpetual agony, uncertain whether their loved ones are alive or dead.

Reports from human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, have documented numerous cases where individuals have been taken without due process. Mass graves discovered in Balochistan have

contained the bodies of missing persons, many bearing signs of torture. These findings indicate a systematic campaign of terror designed to suppress the Baloch liberation movement and eliminate those who dare to resist.

### **State-Sponsored Death Squads and Proxy Violence**

In addition to direct actions by security forces, the Pakistani state has employed proxy death squads to carry out targeted killings and abductions. These groups, often composed of local mercenaries and religious extremists, operate with impunity, providing the state with plausible deniability while furthering its campaign of repression.

The Human Rights Council of Balochistan has reported extensively on the activities of these death squads. Their victims include students, activists, journalists, and intellectuals—anyone who poses a challenge to the state's dominance over Balochistan. By outsourcing violence to these proxies, the state not only perpetuates fear but also deepens societal divisions, turning communities against each other.

### **The Impact on Baloch Society**

The consequences of these targeted killings are devastating for Baloch society. The elimination of

intellectuals creates a vacuum in leadership, disrupts the transmission of cultural knowledge, and instills fear among those who might otherwise contribute to social and political discourse.

Educational institutions have been particularly affected. Teachers and professors face constant threats, leading many to flee the region or self-censor. The result is a decline in educational standards and a generation of students deprived of quality instruction and mentorship. The state's actions have created an environment where seeking knowledge itself is a dangerous act, further marginalizing the Baloch people.

### **International Response and the Need for Accountability**

Despite the severity of the situation, international attention to the plight of the Baloch people remains limited. While human rights organizations have issued reports condemning Pakistan's actions, there has been little concrete action from the international community to hold the state accountable.

The United Nations and other international bodies must prioritize the human rights crisis in Balochistan.

Independent investigations into enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and the role of state-sponsored

death squads are urgently needed. Sanctions should be imposed on Pakistan responsible for these crimes, and international legal mechanisms should be explored to prosecute those involved in human rights abuses.

Moreover, foreign governments and human rights organizations must amplify the voices of Baloch intellectuals and activists. The global media must shed light on these atrocities, breaking the silence that allows Pakistan to continue its campaign of repression with impunity.

### **The Path Forward: Resistance and Solidarity**

Despite the relentless oppression, the spirit of the Baloch resistance remains unbroken. The courage of intellectuals who continue to document, educate, and resist against all odds is a testament to the resilience of the Baloch people. we urge the global community to recognize these atrocities and stand in solidarity with the Baloch nation. Awareness campaigns, advocacy initiatives, and direct pressure on the Pakistani government are essential steps in challenging the ongoing genocide in Balochistan. The targeted killings of Baloch intellectuals are not just attacks on individuals but an assault on an entire people's quest for self-determination and cultural preservation. The international community must not remain silent. Justice,

accountability, and the fundamental right of the Baloch people to determine their own future must be upheld.

## **Conclusion**

The targeted killings of Baloch intellectuals are part of a broader strategy to suppress a people's aspirations for freedom and identity. These killings are designed to silence dissent, dismantle leadership, and erase cultural heritage. However, history has shown that ideas cannot be killed, and the struggle for justice will continue.

The Baloch nation demands recognition, justice, and the right to determine its own destiny. The international community must act decisively to end this cycle of violence and repression. Only through collective action can we hope to build a future where the Baloch people can live in peace, dignity, and sovereignty.

**Long live Balochistan**