



THE BALUCH WHO IS NOT  
**MISSING**  
& OTHERS WHO ARE

MOHAMMED HANIF



Human Rights  
Commission of Pakistan



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# THE BALOCH WHO IS NOT MISSING & OTHERS WHO ARE

## Contents:

Foreword	01
Profiles of misery	02
The Baloch Who is not Missing Anymore	10
The Journalist who became a Uniform Contractor	15
A Sister's Vigil	21
The Boy on the Bicycle	27
The Good Doctor's Daughter	33
Looking for Uncle Ali	37

## Foreword

Since 2005, the Human Rights Commission has been paying special attention to the increasingly alarming human rights situation in Balochistan. The Commission has organized four fact-finding missions to the province, the reports of which have been widely disseminated. A special desk on missing persons has also been set up in Quetta that maintains data on enforced disappearances and killings.

However, it was after reading Mohammed Hanif's account of his meeting with Qadeer Baloch in Dawn that the idea of a book came to me. Hanif's conversation with Qadeer Baloch about the disappearance and killing of his son, Jaleel Reiki, was moving – and disturbing – in a way that statistics can never be. I knew that if HRCP were to publish a book about the missing in Balochistan, Hanif would be the writer to put the stories together. He was quick to agree and joined HRCP's fact-finding mission to Balochistan in May 2012.

The stories published in this collection are mostly based on the interviews Hanif conducted with families of the missing during the fact-finding mission. He has narrated their tragedy with empathy and understanding. It is hoped that this publication will evoke similar feelings in those in a position to meaningfully address the sufferings of these families.

HRCP continues to share the pain of the families of two of its activists, Naeem Sabir, shot dead in Khuzdar (March 2011) and Siddique Eido who was made to 'disappear' and whose body was recovered in Pasni (April 2011). Their killers remain at large.

Zohra Yusuf  
Chairperson

December 2012

## Introduction

### Profiles of misery

The tales of sorrow and suffering presented in this publication reveal only the tip of a tragedy of immeasurable dimensions. They offer only a glimpse of the indescribable misery caused by enforced or involuntary disappearances not only to the primary victims but also, and perhaps to a greater degree, to their near and dear ones. The latter do not know where their missing relatives are, when they will return to their families, whether they will ever come back, and whether they are even alive. They desperately cling to hope even when there is little evidence to sustain it.

For quite some time, matters related to enforced disappearances have been at the top of rights organisations' agenda. The people of Balochistan are almost unanimous in holding an end to enforced disappearances to be a pre-requisite to the restoration of peace and stability in their land. And the custodians of power in Pakistan are beginning to realize how serious a threat to the integrity of their state this matter poses.

How has this multi-dimensional crisis developed?

Except for some instances in the early years of independence or during the military operations in 1970-71 in the then eastern wing of the country, Pakistan was free of the phenomenon of enforced disappearance till the mid-1980s when a large number of Pakistanis joined the 'jihad' in Afghanistan. While most of them went there voluntarily and after informing their families, many left their homes without announcement and in some cases their departure was believed to be involuntary. The latter group included students of madressas in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa who were given marching orders by the managers of their seminaries and the question of their willingness to join battle or otherwise did not arise. Some of these cases were reported to the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID).<sup>1</sup> No serious attention was paid to such cases in the country in view of the support the jihad in Afghanistan enjoyed in a large segment of the population.

Early in the 1990s the Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) claimed that over two scores of its activists had disappeared during the military operations carried out to restore order in Karachi. (Some of these complaints are now being investigated by an official commission.) These cases too did not cause much of a stir outside Karachi.

It was after the US had launched its "war against terror" in Afghanistan, following the 9/11 raids in New York and Washington, that incidents of involuntary disappearance started causing anxiety to the public.

From 2000 onward, the media started reporting the disappearance of Pakistanis for short periods. They included medical practitioners suspected of having attended on sick / wounded leaders of Al-Qaeda or the Taliban forces.<sup>2</sup> In 2002, Dr Afia Siddiqui, a highly qualified microbiologist who had been working in the United States, disappeared after being arrested in Karachi. Highly placed authorities confirmed her arrest. She was handed over to the US forces operating in Afghanistan. Several cases of disappearance were reported in 2004. The victims included a Lahore lawyer, Rafee Akbar, and a Karachi businessman, Saifullah Piracha. While the former was lucky to be able to return home after some time, though not free or able to tell his story, the family of the latter learnt of his detention at the US base at Bagram in Afghanistan only on receiving a letter from him through the Red Cross.<sup>3</sup>

These cases attracted considerable public attention for two main reasons. First, the persons involved were known and well-to-do members of urban communities and they had access to the media. Secondly, the handing over of Pakistani citizens to a foreign power with whom the country had no extradition agreement gave rise to questions regarding violation of the law on the subject.<sup>4</sup>

However, several factors obstructed crystallisation of public sentiment against disappearances. The victims were accused of collaborating with Al-Qaeda or Taliban and they could easily be branded terrorists, a label that virtually deprived them of their right to liberty or due process. Official spokesmen, including the military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, claimed that the persons alleged to have involuntarily disappeared had either gone to join the jihad in Afghanistan or had chosen to disappear in order to escape the consequences of their wrongdoing. Such explanations were not always rejected by the people, especially the less informed among them.

The people, at least the knowledgeable ones, began to emerge from the mist of confusion and uncertainty in 2005-2006 when disappearances were reported from Balochistan, and in good numbers too, as there was no pro-Taliban/Al-Qaeda activity there. Besides, the first crop of victims comprised nationalist students who were known to be campaigning for their people's democratic rights. In at least one case a jail official blamed the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the country's most powerful secret service, for a person's disappearance.<sup>5</sup> By the end of 2006 the organisations working for human rights and rule of law were reporting a substantial increase in the number of enforced disappearances. The figures of victims quoted by them ranged from 400 to 600 while Baloch organisations mentioned much higher figures.<sup>6</sup> In its petition to the Supreme Court filed at the beginning of 2007, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) presented a list of 240 missing persons whose particulars, as

required by the UN reporting system, it had been able to gather. In subsequent years a spurt in cases of disappearance was reported from Sindh as well.

The exact number of the involuntarily disappearing people is difficult to ascertain as many such cases are not reported to any government or non-government organization. Some of the victim families do not have access to channels of protest and redress and some others keep quiet out of the fear that public airing of their grievance could harm the 'missing persons' and make their return difficult or impossible. Thus different figures are given by different quarters, especially in Balochistan.<sup>6</sup> The provincial government itself once put the estimate of the 'missing persons' at 950 while the number quoted by some non-official sources exceeds 14,000. At the end of August 2012 a Baloch organisation, Voice of the Baloch Missing Persons, said it had documented 1,300 cases from Balochistan alone. In September the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances was said to have more than 500 cases on its roster.<sup>7</sup>

New cases of disappearance continue to be reported to this day. However, there have been periods when the number of fresh cases has shown a marginal decline.

As the campaign against enforced disappearances gathered strength and the judiciary started taking greater interest in the matter, a new phenomenon – appearance of dead bodies at public places – began to cause serious concern. Many of the deceased had been on the list of 'missing persons' for various periods. Sometimes these bodies, bearing marks of horrible torture and quite a few badly mutilated or in a state of decomposition, were found near the places from where they had been abducted while others were discovered in far-flung areas.<sup>8</sup> While the largest number of these dead bodies were found in Balochistan, similar cases were reported from Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa also.

While the narrative of enforced disappearances constitutes one of the darkest chapters in Pakistan's history, the struggle to secure justice for the victims waged by their families, sympathisers and NGOs commands unqualified respect. Many grief-stricken families have travelled from far corners of Balochistan to Quetta and Islamabad to stay in improvised camps for months on end and stage protests in attempts to awaken the community's conscience to their ultimate plight. Neither rain nor cold weather has dampened their resolve to have their forcibly separated relatives recovered, or at least to get their fate ascertained. Their perseverance has made a signal contribution to the increase in the judiciary's interest in the matter, especially to a significant enlargement in the scope of the habeas corpus law. The earliest habeas corpus petitions failed to secure the recovery of involuntarily disappeared persons because



the court bailiffs did not find them at the places of detention mentioned in the petitions. After a number of such fruitless initiatives the high courts, especially that of Sindh, started allowing amendments to petitions to enable bailiffs to look for detainees at alternative places. The court also gradually accepted the view that the state had a duty to trace the 'missing persons' wherever they were. Since some petitioners had identified the military intelligence agencies as the authorities responsible for abducting and detaining the "missing persons", notices began to be issued to them. For quite some time the state counsel kept protesting that the government ministry concerned had no control over military intelligence agencies and the latter kept declining to answer the summons. They yielded finally in December 2010 when they admitted before the Supreme Court that the 11 persons who had disappeared from Adiala (Rawalpindi) jail, when they were due to be released, were in their custody.

In view of the slow pace of recovery of the victims of enforced disappearances the Supreme Court suggested the creation of a special commission for dealing with such cases. The government accordingly constituted the Commission of Enquiry on Enforced Disappearances, headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court and including two retired high court judges. The commission had a brief tenure, May 01, 2010 to December 31, 2010. Its fairly broad terms of reference included investigation into cases of enforced disappearance, identification of persons/institutions responsible for these incidents, and the affected families' entitlement to compensation.

While the commission justified circumvention of the due process when proceeding against terrorists, with some safeguards for the accused/suspect, it did fill some of the gaps in the campaign to end enforced disappearances. First, the commission confirmed that fresh incidents of involuntary disappearance continued to be reported. When it began working it had 189 cases before it and by the end of its eight-month assignment 203 fresh cases of disappearance had been added to the list. It disposed of 254 cases, succeeding in tracing 134 persons, and 138 cases were left pending.

Secondly, the commission came to the conclusion that the role of state services, particularly the military intelligence agencies, in enforced disappearances could not be denied. It admitted that "we have not come across any such case of a missing person whose custody may be alleged to be with some one other than the state agency." It found sufficient proof of 66 persons having been kept in the custody of intelligence/law enforcing agencies and their families' entitlement to compensation was upheld. The commission also called for legislation to rein in the intelligence agencies.<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, the commission strongly criticised the conduct of the police.

They were blamed for becoming the intelligence agencies' accessories in picking up the latter's victims. They knew who the captives were and who had caught them and yet they revealed these facts neither to their senior authorities nor to the families of the victims. The police officers were reprimanded for registering false FIRs against the victims of enforced disappearance when they were delivered to the police by the intelligence agencies after being found innocent or not worth being detained.

The instances of police excesses mentioned by the commission belong to the genre of sensational yarns. For instance, Abdul Khaliq Awan of Rawalpindi was reported to have disappeared on March 20, 2010 and he was shown to have been arrested under the Anti-terrorism Act on November 23, 2010 – a good eight months afterwards. He had to be released as, in the words of the commission, “it was such a weak and fabricated case that the relevant court acquitted Abdul Khaliq Awan at the very first hearing.” In another case, the commission described the arrest of a Karachi businessman from a Lahore-bound plane as a “classic example of state terrorism.”<sup>10</sup>

The commission's recommendation for the formation of another body to continue its work has been accepted and a commission headed by a former Supreme Court Judge and comprising two senior bureaucrats is now conducting inquiries into cases of enforced disappearance.

It was considered pertinent to recall the work done by the commission of 2010 because it confirms not only the state's duty to end the plight of citizens caused by its minions, however powerful or privileged they may be, but also its authority to do so. That a body of state functionaries is not subject to its writ is a matter to be settled by the state. The citizens cannot be penalised for the state's incompetence and inadequacies.

Besides, some of the cases dealt with by the commission bring out the people's ordeal at the hands of predatory state employees. From the numbers game we can move to the heart of the matter – the heart rending stories of what the 'missing persons' and their families go through at the hands of robot-like tormentors who know little about the rule of law or discipline and who are as devoid of feelings of compassion as a log of dead wood.

Quite a few other cases noted by rights organizations revealed the extent of the suffering of 'missing persons' and the patterns of torture devised by men paid out of public resources to guarantee and protect all citizens' right to security of life, liberty and personal dignity.

Dr Safdar Sarki, a well-known Sindhi nationalist, was taken into

customdy by men in plain clothes from his house in Karachi in 2006. His arrest and detention were denied by all the concerned authorities. He was holding American nationality but the US request for his recovery had no effect. He was kept blind-folded for long periods in cold and damp cells, he knew not in which part of the country. His health was seriously affected and he started losing his eyesight. About a year after his arrest he was produced before a magistrate in Zhob, Balochistan, charged with possessing illicit weapons that the police had planted on him, and with hijacking a taxi, the vehicle used by the police to drive him to the court.<sup>11</sup>

Two young women, Arifa and Saba Baloch, belonging to Karachi were arrested in Swat in 2005. Newspaper reports described them as terrorists trained for carrying out suicide bombing. Habeas corpus petitions for their recovery failed. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan was approached to take up their case by their father who believed they were being tortured. One of them had a small child with her. After about a year HRCP learnt that the young women had returned to their home in Karachi but its requests to meet them were firmly declined. Their father said their lips were sealed and they did not wish to imperil their lives by talking about their experience.<sup>12</sup>

The case of Nazir Ahmad reads like a fantasy. The police arrested him on the suspicion that he was involved in some incidents of terrorism, threw him in a police lock-up and forgot him. Two years later his relatives moved a habeas corpus petition in the Lahore High Court, Rawalpindi Bench, and the court bailiff found him locked up at a police station in Rawalpindi, the federal capital's twin city. The bailiff found no record of his arrest. As provided in the law he seized the police diary but when he tried to take Nazir Ahmad along with him, a police officer intervened and told him that the detainee was involved in serious crimes and could not be surrendered to the court official. He also snatched from the bailiff the record he had seized.

The bailiff reported the matter to the high court but before it could take any action the Supreme Court took notice of the matter. The chief of the provincial police told the Supreme Court that Nazir Ahmad was facing trial in an anti-terrorism court for possessing lethal weapons and explosives. The court was not convinced and asked him to file a fresh report after some time. At the next hearing he declared that Nazir Ahmad had been acquitted by the anti-terrorism court as no weapons had been recovered from him but now he was being detained under the Security Act. The habeas corpus petition became infructuous. The media reports of enforced disappearances or dead bodies found lying by the roadside or hanging by the trees at best tell of numbers missing or dead, or the names of the victims and the positions in some parties they enjoyed. It is only when we dig deeper into the stories of these unfortunate citizens of

Pakistan or listen to the tales of woe from their fathers, mothers, sisters or children that we can have some idea of the enormous humanitarian tragedy, of man's brutality towards fellow beings, that the two ordinary looking words – enforced disappearances – imply.

The UNWGEID mission to Pakistan ended its report on a query by the mother of a missing person, "If your son disappeared, what would you do?" The wretched victims of a cruel deal Mohammed Hanif was able to talk to ask each and every citizen of Pakistan: 'What would you have done if you were in my place?'

– I. A. Rehman

Lahore,  
December 2012

## Notes:

1. HRCP publication 'Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan: UN working group's preliminary report; November 2012; p 8. The UNWGEID visited Pakistan in September 2012 and its preliminary report can be accessed at <http://www.ohchr.org/Eng/NewsEvents/pages/DisplayNews>.
2. The doctors included the Khawaja brothers living near Lahore and a well-known surgeon in the Punjab capital.
3. HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2004, pp 33-35.
4. The Pakistan Extradition Act of 1972 allows extradition of Pakistanis for offences against a foreign country only after a judicial process or subject to certain conditions. See UNWGEID report, cited above, p 9.
5. HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2005, pp 91-93
6. UNWGEID report, P 10.
7. *ibid*, p 9
8. *ibid*, p 10
9. The News, Lahore, January 14, 2011
10. *ibid*
11. HRCP archives
12. HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2005, and archives.

The Baloch  
who is

**NOT  
MISSING  
ANYMORE**



## **The Baloch who is Not Missing Anymore**

**“Your job was to take him  
away. Your job was to kill him.  
You have done your job. I can  
do the rest myself.”**

**Qadeer Baloch**  
(father of former missing person, Jaleel Reiki)

Two days before last Eid ul Azha, Qadeer Baloch, a retired UBL employee from Quetta did something that no family man should have to do. He held his five year old grandson's hand and took him to see his dead father's body. Qadeer Baloch made sure that the kid got a good look at his father Jaleel Reiki's bullet-riddled, badly mutilated body. Qadeer Baloch also had a chat with the boy and told him who had killed his father and why.

For three years Qadeer had been lying to the boy. "When Jaleel was picked up the boy was only two," says Qadeer Baloch. "He also had a hole in his heart and the doctors had told us not to put him under any kind of stress. So for three years I kept telling him that his father was away on business." Qadeer speaks in measured sentences, there is no bitterness or anger in his voice. His account of his son's disappearance and death three years later, is incredibly detailed; his habit of producing a document or a date or an affidavit witness to prove his point will put many reporters to shame. The FIR he registered names (former) ISI chief General Pasha as the main accused in his son's disappearance and death.

Jaleel was the information secretary of Baloch Republican Party, a small group that emerged after Nawab Akbar Bugti's Jamhoori Watan Party split into many factions after his murder. "Jaleel was offered the post of Secretary General, but he was a bit bookish, always interested in reading and writing, so he decided to become the party's information secretary." They came for him in two pick-up trucks and two unregistered cars, FC men accompanied by intelligence officials in plain clothes. "His friends had warned him that he was about to be picked up but he was campaigning for his other missing colleagues. He said if I run away who is going to write all the press releases? He was coming back after saying his Friday prayers, he saw them and tried to run but they threatened to shoot him and he surrendered."



For the next three years Jaleel Reiki became a missing person. There are thousands if you believe the Baloch nationalists, hundreds according to the human rights organisations and none according to our intelligence agencies.

I.A. Rehman wrote two years ago: “Instead of offering the embittered Baloch redress and satisfaction, the authorities have chosen to quibble over the number of missing persons or alleged exaggeration about women amongst them.”

For Qadeer Baloch, Jaleel Reiki wasn't a stat. Nor were the other activists who were missing. He rallied the families of missing people and started an organisation called Voice of the Baloch Missing People. They camp outside the Quetta, Islamabad and Karachi press clubs sometimes for three months. Journalists mostly ignore them. They sit behind rows of photos of their martyred and missing. Most of the missing people are in their twenties and thirties. Jaleel Reiki has a rakish smile, a mustache and deep eyes of someone who thinks a lot.

“I talked to him about his political activities. I knew what he was doing was dangerous. But he told me he was doing it for his people, for his land. He said he wasn't selling heroin or doing anything immoral. And I understood.” Qadeer Baloch himself was politically active as a NAP member in the seventies and remembers those days fondly when they only filed a case against you, arrested you, you tried to get bail. “None of this stuff where a person just disappears from the face of this earth.”

In the years that Jaleel was missing, he was able to talk to his family only once. “It was around Eid time and all the officers were away. Some poor soldier took pity on him. We received a call on our landline and someone said put one thousand rupees balance on a mobile number and then wait for the call. I went to two shops and bought the balance for five hundred rupees each. We received a call late in the night. Jaleel told us not to pass this number on to anyone. He sounded confident.

“He said they had punished him a lot. I understood that he had been tortured. His wife started to cry, his son was only two and a half year old, he didn't understand what was going on. He told me not to beg anyone for his release. I was sure they'd let him go. Because killing him would serve no purpose.”

Qadeer Baloch would remain certain for another two years before he saw his son's body. Meanwhile he kept getting reports of his sightings from other Baloch activists who were released after spending two to three years in the military run dungeons. “They used to take turns giving the azaan,” Qadeer says with a certain pride. “And after finishing the azaan, after

saying la ilah ha illallah they would announce their name as if it was a part of the azaan, so that the other prisoners would know that who you were and you were still alive. So that if they ever got out they could tell your families that you were alive.”

All these years Qadeer Baloch never doubted that his son would not return. “He would be battered, bruised and probably psychologically damaged, but he would be alive. That’s what I believed,” he says.

Qadeer filed cases, tried to lobby the media, turned up for the hearings conducted by a judicial commission set up to investigate the cases of the missing people. “A colonel came up to me at one of these hearing and said that we really feel bad for you, you are an old man.” Qadeer was courteous. “I said if you really feel bad for me, you should let my son go. And they reassured me that if my son was a political activist he would be released.” Qadeer believed them but kept up his activities as the coordinator for the Voice of Baloch Missing People.

Then two years and three months after his son had been taken away, Jaleel Reiki stopped being a missing person. He became a dead person. A badly mutilated, shot-in-the-heart dead person.

“Someone saw a ticker on Vash channel and called me up. They didn’t have the heart to tell me so they just said can you switch on Vash News channel and see. And yes there it was, my son’s name. It said his body had been found in Turbat.” Qadeer still didn’t believe it. It made no sense to him.



The  
**JOURNALIST**  
who became a  
**UNIFORM**  
**CONTRACTOR**

## **The Journalist who became a Uniform Contractor**

**“What did you expect them to do?  
Their man was ambushed in the  
city, what were they supposed to  
do? Sit quietly and tell their bosses  
they didn’t know who attacked  
their man?”**

**Bilal Mengal**  
(father of Khalid Mengal)

Mohammed Bilal Mengal works as an honorary journalist in Noshki. He is a correspondent for a newspaper called Independent that comes out of Quetta, Gwadar and Islamabad. It's one of those newspapers that you are not really likely to find on a news stand. Bilal Mengal studied till class six and he can read and write in Urdu. Independent doesn't pay him a salary, of course. He is usually paid by the subjects he covers. He is an honest worker. He refers to his work as 'making news'.

"Usually NGOs pay about a thousand rupees for making 'one news'. Sometimes you cover a press conference and they pay about five hundred. It also depends how many journalists are there, because obviously they have to distribute the money properly."

Bilal also covered the Pakistan day ceremonies organized by the Pakistan Army unit stationed at Qila Noshki. "I used to cover 14th August and 23rd March ceremonies. If ten journalists turned up we made seven hundred rupees each." Although the Army didn't pay as much as the NGOs did, Bilal Mengal made friends in the Noshki Fort. A kind hearted Colonel asked him if he could be of any help. Bilal landed a contract for stitching uniforms for the unit. One might think that going from being a reporter to a uniform tailoring contractor is a drastic career move but Bilal had nine children to feed. Noshki is not really an NGO rich district, press conferences were few and far between and Pakistan day gigs came around only twice a year.

Bilal Mengal's elder brother was a professional tailor so he did have some background in tailoring. The contract offer made perfect sense to Bilal Mengal and he embarked upon a new career, not knowing that it'll take away his favourite son from him.

Bilal Mengal set up a shop inside the fort. He was contracted to stitch 3300 uniforms every year. He was paid 70 rupees per uniform. The Army unit supplied the material. Bilal was expected to stitch civilian dresses for some officers but he was happy with the arrangement. He roped in his 22-year old son Khalid Bilal Mengal to help out.

That probably was a mistake.

Because Khalid Mengal has been missing for the past one year. Bilal knows that his son is in Army custody. He saw the army vehicles carrying Khalid drive into the Noshki Fort.

There is a certain boundary that the bravest SHO in the land can't cross. Khalid Bilal Mengal is on the list of the Baloch missing persons, but since he didn't belong to any political organization, didn't have a beard, his name gets frequently ignored in the protests and petitions. But Bilal Mengal has a stack of papers and numerous eyewitnesses to prove that his son was picked up by his former employers: the Pakistan army. During the time Bilal Mengal worked in his tailoring shop in the fort, the soldiers and officers posted in Fort Noshki had standing orders that they couldn't leave the premises without written permission from the Fort authorities. And because of the risk of attacks in Noshki town, this permission wasn't easy to come by. Naib Subedar Ramzan left the fortress without permission, went into the town and was injured in a firing incident. At first Bilal Mengal insists that he had no clue why Naib Subedar Ramzan went out without permission but later speculates: "Maybe he had a date in the city. It was most probably a woman. Otherwise why would anyone take such a risk?"

Bilal Mengal was accused of the attack.

Initially the case was filed against an unknown assailant who, according to the FIR, had long hair and blue eyes. "Look at me," says Bilal Mengal, pointing to his short hair, long beard and charcoal eyes. "I can cut my hair, I can grow a beard but can I change the colour of my eyes?"

Bilal Mengal was the first one who was arrested on the suspicion of attacking the Naib Subedar.

"The attack happened at 6:30 in the evening. That is recorded in the FIR. According to the Fort Guardroom we left the fort at 7.15. So when the attack happened my son and I were both inside the fort, doing our work." Bilal Mengal was often sent off to the city to run officers' personal errands because they themselves couldn't go. "But that day I didn't leave the fort. There were no errands." Later Bilal Mengal was to find out the truth when the staff officer to Inspector General Frontier Corps told him bluntly. "What did you expect them to do? Their man was ambushed in the city,

what were they supposed to do? Sit quietly and tell their bosses they didn't know who attacked their man?"

The FC high command demanded results or 'recovery' as Bilal Mengal puts it so the Noshki Command, already working in an area so hostile that you needed written permission from the highest level to even step out, went ahead and apprehended the first people they could. Those people happened to be their own tailoring contractor and his son.

"They kept us in the fort for four days and then handed us over to the local police," says Bilal Mengal. They booked him on terrorism charges and their case was transferred to an Anti Terrorist court in Quetta.

"The case went on for ten months. They couldn't prove anything and at the end I was released honourably." While Bilal was still in jail facing trial, his son Khalid was picked up by Noshki police while he was in Quetta to attend his father's hearing. Bilal heard about his son's arrest through other prisoners who happened to be in the court. "Khalid was the breadwinner in the house. He had started doing my reporting job, while I was in jail. Other prisoners who were present in the court told me that your son was picked up from the court premises. At my next hearing, I pleaded with the judge that my son has been picked up from your court, please do something." Khalid came back home after twenty five days. Bilal Mengal was relieved. But he knew that his family's ordeal wasn't over. He asked Noshki police to provide security. They refused.

On the night of May 16, 2011 there was a raid on his house. "There were lots of double door vehicles, men with their faces covered. They broke into my house at 2 am. They left at 2.15 am along with two of his sons, Khalid and Murtaza.

Bilal called up the local SHO and pleaded with him to follow the kidnappers. He himself climbed on to the roof of the house from where he could see the vehicles' movement. "They were going towards Fort's Gate No 1. The SHO followed them till the gate but he was not allowed to go in. Three vehicles went in and the door was shut."

Bilal filed an FIR in the morning and then went and started a hunger strike in front of the Noshki press club. Bilal Mengal followed a path which almost everyone with a missing family member has followed in Balochistan: You follow the law, you file an FIR, you file a petition even though you know that the law wouldn't do anything. Then you start protesting and hope that someone will notice.

The members of Noshki's Bazar Committee intervened saying that they will speak to the military authorities in the Fort and if his son is not

released then they'll all go on hunger strike together. His son wasn't released. Nobody from the Bazar Committee joined him in his protest.

Like many others, Bilal Mengal filed a petition in the Balochistan High Court and started to appear at missing persons' families' protests. He kept trying to use his past goodwill in the Army to get his son released. The high point of his efforts came when he managed to wrangle a meeting with the personal staff officer of Quetta's Corps Commander. "We don't pick up people and we don't dump bodies," he was told in clear terms. He also managed to meet the personal staff officer of IG FC where he was told something about himself he had never heard about. "This Major looked in a file and then looked at me and said: but you have been sentenced to twenty five years imprisonment., you should be in jail What are you doing here?"

"I am standing here, in front of you. You registered a false case against me, and I was exonerated."

The meeting ended at this note of confusion, with the Major insisting that he should be in jail and Bilal arguing that he was a free man. Bilal Mengal has been appearing in the Supreme Court hearings initiated by the Chief Justice but doesn't seem to have much faith. "The Chief Justice comes here only to keep up appearances. He is only concerned about saving his own face. Nothing has changed, nothing will change." What about Mengal's own politics? Does he support the insurgency in Balochistan? "I was a member of Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi's National Peoples Party. He was the last decent politician in the country and I supported him. Since then I have never supported any political party." Anyone who has even a cursory knowledge of Pakistan's political history can tell you that the NPP is as far away as you can get from any nationalist struggle or anything to do with an armed struggle for people's rights.

Bilal Mengal's last journalistic assignment was for an NGO called Mercy Corps. They paid him seven hundred rupees.





**A SISTER'S  
VIGIL**

## **A Sister's Vigil**

**“People occasionally dropped by to express their solidarity.**

**International media came. TV cameras came. But they didn't really do much. Nothing changed. I even spent my Eid days in the protest camp. Nothing changed.”**

**Farzana Majeed**  
(sister of missing Zakir Majeed)

Farzana Majeed has done her Masters in Biochemistry from Balochistan University, and now is enrolled in the M. Phil programme. If she wasn't a Baloch she'd be either wearing a white coat and working in a lab or, like many young people her age, struggling to get a job. Or at least turning up for her M. Phil classes. Instead she has spent the last three years of her life sitting in protest camps, turning up for court hearings. All this while she has been waiting for some news about her brother Zakir Majeed, organising and leading political rallies.

She has been hoping that she wouldn't get the kind of news that some of her fellow protestors have received while sitting in the camp with her. She spends her days reading and sharing the newspaper with other protesters, watching the passersby go by without even stopping to look at this young girl in a burqa, camped out on the pavement circled by rows and rows of pictures of the missing and the martyred.

She is absolutely scared of getting that kind of news.

Zakir Majeed was a student of Masters in English and the vice president of Baloch Students Organisation (Azad), a nationalist students' organization with the avowed aim of raising awareness about Baloch rights on the campuses. BSO Azad has lost a number of its senior leaders, but it still persists with its struggle for the rights of the Baloch people.

Zakir was returning from Mastung with a couple of friends when they were chased and stopped by a number of vehicles; one Vigo with tinted glasses, two Hiluxes, one was red. The details of the raid were told to Farzana by Zakir's friends who were picked up with him but were allowed to go fifteen minutes later. "His friends called between zohar and asar," says Farzana. "I didn't want to believe them. I turned on the TV. There was a ticker on only one channel about Zakir's abduction. The first thing that occurred to me was that I must not tell my mother. She was not keeping well and I didn't want to stress her.

“I called up his other friends. They also confirmed it. I still didn’t tell my mother.” Farzana contacted the representative of the Human Rights Commission in Khuzdar. Her younger brother went to Mastung along with Zakir’s friends who were witnesses to his kidnapping and lodged an FIR.

Farzana kept making flimsy excuses to her mother about why Zakir hadn’t returned home. “Then a couple of days later she had to go out of the house to pay her condolences to a family friend. I realized that people will tell her. She’ll find out because everybody around us knew so I decided to tell her. I said casually that the police had taken Zakir.” Farzana’s mother broke down and started to pray. “And she is still at it, she is still praying,” says Farzana, in an irritated tone, like someone who has serious doubts about whether anybody is listening to their prayers, that her mother’s prayers are as futile as her own protests, as useless as the court hearings she has been attending for past three years. Zakir had been arrested before for his political activities. Charges were always the same; organising a strike, a protest, at worst vandalism, etc. “Every time his case came up, the session judge freed him. There was no case against him. He was a political worker, not a criminal.”

Two weeks after Zakir was kidnapped Farzana filed a writ petition in Balochistan High Court. Then she held a press conference in the Press Club in Khuzdar, staged a protest outside the Quetta Press Club and then in May 2010 set up a protest camp in Karachi, along with the families of other missing persons. This was her first extended stay in Karachi. She stayed in various places while protesting, sometimes in Gulshan-e-Iqbal, sometimes in Lyari. She had been to Karachi as a teenager for sightseeing but this time around she herself was the centre of attention. “People occasionally dropped by to express their solidarity. The international media came. TV cameras came. But they didn’t really do much. Nothing changed. I even spent my Eid days in the protest camp. Nothing changed.”

Then suddenly disfigured bodies of the missing persons started to appear with greater frequency. Farzana along with Abdul Qadeer Baloch, a leader of the Voice for Missing Baloch Persons, who she refers to as Mama Qadeer, went and set up a protest camp in Islamabad in the hope of putting pressure on the authorities, to get the media to talk about the disappearances. Like every other family of the missing persons, Farzana went and met Justice Javaid Iqbal. Justice Javaid Iqbal told her what he has told every other Baloch family: Shut down the protest camp, go home and your family members will be with you within a week. In his capacity as a former senior Supreme Court judge, and the man responsible for investigating the cases of the missing people, Javaid Iqbal has played a curious role in perpetuating this nightmare. He has made so many false promises to so many families that many see him as part of the problem. They shifted the protest camp to Quetta and Farzana went home to Khuzdar

to spend some time with her family. She started receiving anonymous, threatening phone calls. "Forget Zakir Majeed, he is never coming back."

While she was still in Khuzdar, a fresh wave of killing and dumping of bodies started.

They found Ghaffar Lango's body.

Lango, father of five daughters and a son, had been missing for three years. He was found near Gadani, his head full of wounds inflicted with a blunt weapon.

Then they found Sameer Rind's body.

Rind was twenty four and missing for a year. His sister had been campaigning along with Farzana.

Then Jalil Reiki's body was dumped.

Jalil had been missing for two years. His father Qadeer Baloch had been organizing all the protests.

Then Sana Sangat's body was found.

Sana had been missing for three years. His body had twenty eight bullets in it.

All were Zakir Majeed's comrades, all were killed after years of captivity. Their bodies told stories of unspeakable brutalities.

Farzana's life is built around demanding an end to these stories.

Farzana changed her phone number, left Khuzdar and went back to the protest camp.

For the first two years Farzana and her family kept getting messages from Zakir Majeed. She has a mental picture of her brother and his whereabouts. He is in a dungeon, with his other friends. "He was kept in Quli Camp. Other people who were kept in that camp and released brought us his messages," says Farzana. But she hasn't received any message for the last six or seven months. "He used to send us his love. He took the buttons off his shirt and sent us, to reassure us that he was alive."

Farzana speaks without any bitterness, in a matter of fact way even when she is rattling off the names of her brother Zakir Majeed's dead colleagues and the number of wounds on their bodies. But she gets angry

when she talks about herself. “Look at me. I am twenty seven years old. Zakir is now twenty five. I want my life. I have my needs. What kind of life is this? I am spending all my life at protest camps in the hope that they’ll not kill my brother. What kind of life is this?”

She has given up on the state of Pakistan and its people. “Isn’t it quite obvious that they hate us Baloch people?”

If Zakir has committed a crime why don’t they bring him to a court, put him on trial, and punish him? Why are they punishing the whole family, the whole nation?”

How does she spend her time at the protest camps? “I read,” she says. “Books about politics. Books about revolutionaries. I have read Che Guevera’s biography. I have read Spartacus. I am currently reading Musa Se Marx Tak. I am learning. I am learning about revolutions and other people’s struggles.”



The  
**BOY** on the  
**BICYCLE**

## **The Boy on the Bicycle**

**“I am tired of speaking, of crying,  
of telling our story again and again.  
If only suicide was not prohibited by  
religion I would have killed myself.  
The court has been hearing our case  
for years but my son is still not  
with me. I have not even been to  
school. How can I talk to the Chief  
Justice?”**

**- Father of a missing person,  
quoted in “Hopes, fears and alienation:  
Report of an HRCP fact-finding mission”**



Six years after Hafiz Saeed Rehman went missing from Sariab Road, Quetta, the police dug up a grave to look for him. The High Court ordered that a body be exhumed because Quetta Police, after giving half a dozen other explanations for his disappearance, had started saying that Hafiz Saeed had been killed. His father, Allah Baksh Bangulzai, who has been campaigning for his son's release for seven years, didn't believe the police. "I knew it wasn't his grave, I knew my son wasn't dead," insists Allah Baksh, who runs a small grocery store near his house.

Allah Baksh Bangulzai's faith wasn't just the faith of a father who can't bring himself to believe that his eldest son might be dead. He had seen with his own eyes the body that was buried in that grave. Six years earlier looking for his newly disappeared son Allah Baksh had done the rounds of the mortuaries. "They showed me two bodies," says Allah Baksh. He had a really good look. "They were both my son's age. One boy had his throat slit. Another one had his legs cut off just below his knees. I was relieved neither of them was my son."

For the next six years Allah Baksh's son kept making fleeting appearances in various reports, official documents and court hearings. Once it was admitted in the Balochistan High Court that he was in the custody of our intelligence organisations. Once he was told that his son had been sentenced to twenty-five years imprisonment because he was a terrorist. Then the High Court was told that he was doing his time in Gujranwala jail. But after six years of running up and down the country and knocking at every door, Allah Baksh stood beside a grave waiting for a body to be exhumed, certain in his heart that it wouldn't be his son. Hafiz Saeed left his home on the evening of July 4, 2003. It was a Friday and there had been a huge bomb blast in the area.

Forty people died in that blast and soon after a curfew was imposed. "He came home after his maghreb prayers, got on his bicycle and left," remembers Allah Baksh. He repeats the same details over and over again as if he has missed something and, if he can remember the exact sequence of events, he'll find out where his son is right now. "There was a curfew in our part of the city, the curfew started at 6 pm and Hafiz left home at 6.15." Six years of searching his memory and he still has no answer why his son left home just after the curfew came into effect.

"Maybe he thought if you are on a bicycle nobody will bother you. Maybe he didn't know that a curfew had been imposed. I don't know what he was thinking."

Hafiz Saeed was twenty-five when he disappeared. He was an obedient and bright son. He had done his Hifz-e-Quran by the age of 15. He went on to do his matric privately. He was teaching other children Hifz-e-Quran at Iqra School. He was the eldest in the family and was engaged to be married a year after he disappeared.

With his madrassah background, his teaching job, his beard and his shalwar above his ankle, a lot of people, especially the security forces, tend to jump to the conclusion that Hafiz must have been somehow involved with some religious cult, some jihadi organization. "He never did any of those things. After finishing his teaching work at school, he came straight to my shop in Gharibabad and helped me out. He had cousins who were also madrassah teachers. Sometimes they visited. I never heard anything political. He was very pious, yes, but he was a straight boy. He was the eldest of my children, he was close to me. I would have known."

Hafiz Saeed didn't return home that night. "My son had never ever not spent a night at home. I got worried. I started looking."

Hafiz Saeed and his family had no personal enmity. His father assumed that Saeed had been picked up by the law enforcing agencies for violating the curfew. He thought about kidnapping for ransom but told himself that who would expect a ransom from someone as poor as him. He registered an FIR, did the rounds of the hospitals and asked everyone he could.

"Fifteen days later a man came looking for me," says Allah Baksh. "He came on a motorbike, introduced himself as Yasin from Military Intelligence." Yasin from MI asked Allah Baksh if his son Hafiz Saeed was involved with any jihadi organization. "I told him that he wasn't involved with anyone or anything except his teaching and my shop."

The man on the motorbike assured Allah Baksh that MI will

investigate and if he was with any of the law enforcing agencies, he'll be released. For the next three months Allah Baksh kept looking but didn't hear anything from anywhere. He filed a petition in the High Court.

The petition has been with the court for seven years, now, but not once has he seen a glimpse of his son despite various orders by the court saying that a meeting should be arranged between the missing person and his family. He has not had any kind of contact with his son during this time.

In the initial hearing a statement submitted on behalf of the ISI said that Hafiz Saeed had been arrested after he was injured in a bomb blast and he was being interrogated. The Crime Branch also confirmed in a separate report that Hafiz Saeed was in the custody of 'sensitive agencies'. The High Court instructed that a meeting be arranged with the family. The meeting never happened. Instead the Crime Branch submitted another report, this time saying that Hafiz Saeed wasn't in the custody of 'sensitive agencies'.

Allah Baksh wrote letters to the President and to the Chief Justice but never heard back. For eleven months he sat in a protest camp outside Quetta Press Club. For all these years there was no sighting, no news of his son but he didn't give up.

Then out of the blue a list surfaced in Balochistan High Court in 2009. There were thirteen missing people on it. They were all supposed to be serving time in jails. Hafiz Saeed was on it. According to the list he had been court martialled and sentenced to twenty five years imprisonment. The report said that he was in Gujranwala jail.

Allah Baksh managed to contact HRCP which sent one of its people to Gujranwala jail.

The jail authorities said they didn't have Hafiz Saeed. Allah Baksh went back to the High Court and this time the police filed a submission that Hafiz Saeed had actually been killed in that blast and buried.

By now Hafiz Saeed had been suspected of being involved in the blast, suspected of being injured in the blast, and now six years later his family was being told that Hafiz Saeed had actually died in the blast six years earlier. Hafiz Saeed had left home four hours after the blast happened. The High court ordered a DNA test. The police was basically saying that one of the bodies that they had shown Allah Baksh six years ago was his son's body. "I had had a good look at those bodies," Allah Baksh again gives a graphic description of the slit throat and decapitated legs. "That wasn't my son." Before they exhumed the body that wasn't his son's, they gave him some clothes and asked if he recognized them. "These clothes didn't belong to my son. After he became a Hafiz-e-Quran he never wore a shirt

with buttons. But just to make sure I took these clothes to show his mother. And she also said that these were not his clothes.”

The body was exhumed and as Allah Baksh had predicted it wasn't his son. He was relieved. But not for long. He says that secretly he envies people who have found the bodies of their loved ones. “They have buried them and now they mourn them,” he says. “All I can do is wait.”

And while he waits, Allah Baksh can't stop thinking of the events of that fateful evening. “What I don't understand is that he came home after offering his maghrab prayers. There had already been a bomb blast. Then he took his bicycle and went out. There was curfew outside. I don't know why he went out.”

A man with a beard and dark hair is looking directly at the camera. He is framed by a jagged, torn red paper effect that separates him from the white background. The overall aesthetic is gritty and dramatic.

The good

**DOCTOR'S  
DAUGHTER**

## **The Good Doctor's Daughter**

**“They said in many cases of disappearance government agencies’ involvement was obvious from the functionaries’ uniforms, the vehicles they used and where the vehicles went. The families said that witnesses who deposed feared that they too would be targeted.”**

**From “Hopes, fears and alienation:  
Report of an HRCF fact-finding mission”**

When twenty year old Saman Baloch, a student of M.Sc. Chemistry, in Balochistan University has to miss a class, she always must lie. She doesn't want her teachers to know that when she is not in her class, she is either at a protest camp, at a court hearing, or addressing a press conference in the hope that some journalist will write about her dad. "I feel bad about lying but if I tell them that I can't come to university because I have to sit in a protest camp outside the press club or go to the Supreme Court or tell them that my dad is a missing person, I'll lose their trust. I don't know what they'll think of me."

Saman, like hundreds of other young women in Balochistan, is in the third year of her campaign to recover her father. Doctor Deen Mohammed was picked up on 28 June, 2009. He was a medical officer in the government hospital in Arnaj, Khuzdar. He was such a dedicated doctor that he visited his family in Quetta for only a few days every three months. "He was completely dedicated to his patients and would say if I am away from hospital who is going to look after them," says Saman. Dr. Deen Mohammad was also very honest. "He never brought us a single pill from the hospital's official medical supplies. If any of us were sick he made sure that we bought our medicines from the market."

Dr. Deen Mohammed was also a political activist, and a member of the central committee of Baloch National Movement (BNM), a progressive political party.

They came for him at his hospital residence in the middle of the night of June 28, 2009. Dr. Deen Mohammed's peon, Ramzan, opened the door after the midnight knock. They tied him up with ropes. There were eight or nine people in two vehicles. Dr. Deen Mohammed locked himself in his living quarter and resisted arrest for about one hour. They broke through the door and took him away.

Dr. Deen Mohammed's driver called his family in Quetta and told them about it. "My sister broke down and started to cry. She still cries a lot."

Dr. Deen Mohammed's brother registered an FIR in Arnaj. The family filed a petition in Balochistan High Court and Saman started showing up at Missing Persons' protest camp outside the Quetta press club. Saman's uncle was called in by the Joint Investigation Team set up to track down the missing people.

They asked him about Dr. Deen Mohammed's political activities. "My father wasn't some guerilla leader who was underground. He wasn't fighting anyone. He was a political worker, who worked openly. BNM isn't a banned organization. Don't they say that doctors are messiahs? He treated patients, he never took any fees. He never did any private practice. And now for three years we haven't had any news about him. Why?"

Saman has a younger brother who had to leave school and start working on the family lands to support the family. But more than all her family problems, she is concerned about her father's body turning up, like that of many other missing people. She keeps wondering as to why do they keep them in custody for years before killing them. She pauses for a moment as if she wants to reach the logical conclusion that if they want to kill them, then why don't they just kill them? She doesn't want to think like that. "I go to the court hearings but my heart is not in it," says Saman. "I know that I am not likely to get justice from these courts."

One prosecution lawyer who turned up on behalf of the government claimed there were fourteen cases registered against Dr. Deen Mohammed. "Now tell me if somebody is missing for three years how can there be fourteen cases against him? Has he been committing these crimes while in their custody?"

Saman has spent the last three years of her life in courts, in protest camps trying to convince the media to keep her father's name alive in the news.

She hasn't had much success. Her mother is a heart patient and needs to be protected from all kind of bad news, and waiting for that one piece of bad news makes her more frustrated than all her other struggles.

"If they want to hang my father, they should bring him to the court and put him on trial and hang him in front of us. We'll at least have the satisfaction that he is no more. But if they keep him alive for three years, four years, if they torture him every day and kill him and dump his body, what is the point of that?"

Saman shakes her head in despair. "Seeing these dead bodies, hearing about them, waiting for more to turn up, we ourselves have turned into the walking dead, we feel like those dumped bodies."





**LOOKING**  
for **UNCLE ALI**

## **Looking for Uncle Ali**

**“I am a common citizen. You are the governor. We are sitting in your Governor House and you are threatening me about my safety.”**

**Nasrullah Bungalzi**

**(chairperson of Voice of Baloch Missing Persons)**

“There are many ways a man can die,” Nasrullah Bungalzai, a twenty-nine year old former student of Quetta Degree College told a certain Colonel Zafar of the Military Intelligence. Nasrullah had been campaigning for the release of his missing uncle, Ali Asghar Bungalzai. And after five years of court appeals, protests and desperate lobbying he was invited to a meeting with a group of MI officers in Quetta cantonment. There were seven or eight other officers in the meeting, all majors and captains.

“If my uncle is alive I am not going to give up. Nobody can abandon their man like that. Maybe my uncle died of natural causes. Maybe you tortured him to death. All I want from you is that you take me to his grave. I’ll dig it up. I’ll identify him. I’ll offer my prayers and then never bother you guys again.”

Colonel Zafar had invited Nasrullah Bungalzai for a meeting because his relentless campaign, his permanent protest camp outside Quetta Press Club were becoming a bit of an embarrassment for the army establishment. “This is basically an ISI case but our ISI colleagues have been asked not to keep contact with the families of the missing persons,” Colonel Zafar told Nasrullah. “And now we have been asked to sort out the issue. Why didn’t you guys come to us before?” Nasrullah tried to remind him that you can’t just walk into MI offices. He reminded him that his father and the brother of the missing Uncle, Daad Khan, had been turned away many times from the cantonment gates.

“You have been meeting the governor?” Colonel Zafar asked him. Yes he had. At least seven times.

“And you have been telling him to summon the local ISI commander to the Governor House?” Yes he had. “He can’t even summon my junior most Captain here. He knows that and you should, too.” The meeting lasted three hours. Nasrullah produced all the evidence he had gathered during five years of his futile search.

And he carries with him a lot of paper. Court orders, affidavits from former missing people, testimonies from MNAs who had been assured by senior Army officers that Uncle Ali Asghar would be released within days. At no point did Colonel Zafar acknowledge or deny that they had Ali Asghar in their custody.

“He was increasingly getting irritated with me,” says Nasrullah who was desperate to get a straight answer. “Maybe you killed him and buried him somewhere inaccessible. Maybe you can’t take me to his grave,” continued Nasrullah. “If that’s the case, then bring out a Quran, put your hand on it and tell me the truth. And I’ll leave you alone.” Colonel Zafar wasn’t impressed by Nasrullah’s emotional appeals. “It’s no use. We are a machine. We are an emotionless machine.” Nasrullah wasn’t about to back down. “But the very fact that you have called me here for a meeting shows that someone somewhere is concerned.”

Visibly fed up, Colonel Zafar repeated his old stance that it was actually an ISI case and he was only trying to help out. And how was he trying to help out? By telling Nasrullah Bungalzai to shut up. The only piece of military-style optimism that Nasrullah got out of the three hour long meeting was when Colonel Zafar told him: “We are not that bad, if we kill your uncle, you’ll find the body somewhere.”

That meeting happened six years ago. Ali Asghar’s family still haven’t got a body. They have been waiting for his return for eleven years now. Ali Asghar Bungalzai ran a tailoring shop called D’ French Tailors near Saryab Road in Quetta. His nephew Nasrullah was at the shop in 2000, when they picked him up for the first time. Two police pickups arrived, behind them three jeeps full of men in plain clothes. They handcuffed Ali Asghar and shoved him into the back of a land cruiser. When the people in the market gathered, a forty year old man announced: “We are from the agencies. We are taking him for investigation. He’ll be back shortly.”

Ali Asghar indeed returned fourteen days later. He had been tortured, given electric shocks and hung upside down in a strange place. Ali Asghar was a political activist and a member of Khair Baklsh Marri’s political party Haq Tawar. They blindfolded him and hung him upside down in what to the blindfolded man seemed like a well. “They stood up there and swore by Allah that if I didn’t agree to turn against Khair Baksh Marri they’ll cut the rope,” Ali Asghar later told his favorite nephew Nasrullah after his release. “He was in a strange shape when he came back from his ordeal,” says Nasrullah. “Sometimes he couldn’t hold a cigarette, his hands shook so

much. Sometimes at nights he would wake up shivering, with his hands and feet swollen. We took him to a doctor and the doctor said he has been injected with some chemical that has wrecked his nervous system.” Ali Asghar started working at D’ French Tailors again but all the while he suspected that they’ll come for him again. They didn’t disappoint him. He was returning after visiting a friend in the Degree College Hostel, when they interrupted him, blindfolded him, put his friend Iqbal into another jeep and whisked them away.

“They put me in an underground cell,” says Iqbal who was released after twenty-four days. The torture started immediately. Four days later Iqbal heard voices. “Someone was saying, wake up Ali Asghar, it’s time for prayers.” He deduced that Ali Asghar was in the cell next door. “Then one day they told me that Ali Asghar has confessed that he is a foreign agent, you should confess, too.” Iqbal went on a hunger strike of sorts. After a few days he got severe kidney pains. “The pain was so intense that, once I banged my head against the wall from morning till evening.” They took pity on him and called in a doctor. “The doctor told them that if I don’t get proper treatment, I’ll die. Or at least will be paralyzed for life.” They gave him medicines and promised to release him. Twenty four days after he was picked up, Iqbal was released.

He came home and brought news of Ali Asghar. He would be one of the three people who’ll bring some firsthand news about Ali Asghar.

When Ali Asghar was picked up, his oldest son was 12. His youngest six months old. He had eight children.

Nasrullah did what everyone in Balochistan with an abducted family member does. He went to the Saryab Road police station and tried to file an FIR. He wanted to name intelligence agencies as kidnappers. No FIR was registered. He went to the High Court. The court ordered that an FIR be registered. No FIR was registered.

Iqbal was traumatized so Nasrullah only produced him once in the court and once at a press conference. He was bedridden. He wanted to help and he did but Nasrullah didn’t want to press him too much. He went back to Balochistan High Court where a judge told him: What are you thinking? These are people in uniform, what can we do about them? He again passed a judgment saying an FIR be registered. No FIR was registered even one year after Ali Asghar’s abduction. The family will have to wait another nine years before an FIR is registered.

In 2003 Nasrullah's family managed to get a hearing with the Quetta Corps commander, who for a change happened to be a Baloch. Abdul Qadir Zehri, who now is a Muslim League MNA. He was helpful. Two army officers visited the family and said, yes we have your man. Wait for another fifteen days, he'll be with you. Nothing happened. Disappointed with the men in uniform, the family took the political route.

"We asked Hafiz Hussain Ahmad for help. We told him you are our representative. If you don't help us, who will?" Hafiz Hussain Ahmed was moved. He picked up the phone and called a certain Brigadier Siddique who was the head of the ISI in Quetta. "Come to my office," they were told. Nasrullah, his father Daad Khan and Hafiz Hussain Ahmed were served tea in Brigadier Siddique's office.

He called in Colonel Bangash and asked him to bring Ali Asghar's file. The Colonel brought in a file, Brigadier Siddique studied it for a few minutes, then he looked up and said something that Nasrullah would keep on quoting for the next eight years. "Congratulations," Brigadier Siddique said. "We have your man. He is alive and well. We arrested him as a suspect. Just for asking him some questions." Hafiz Hussain Ahmed spoke up. "If he has done anything against the state, if you suspect that he has done something, I'll never say a word about him. Do your investigation, take your time."

For the next one year, Brigadier Siddique kept meeting the family every month. There was still an investigation. The family requested a meeting with Ali Asghar, some evidence of his existence. They were asked to bring some clothes for him. That was very reassuring for the family. If the local head of the ISI asks you to bring clothes for your missing uncle, it surely means that not only your uncle is alive, he is well enough to deserve a new set of clothes. In the bargain they were told to keep quiet, reassured something will work out.

They were given a demonstration of the Brigadier's powers. One day, Nasrullah sat in Brigadier Siddique's office when his staff called to say that a minister was there to see him. Brigadier Siddique told the staff to tell him he was busy and couldn't see him. Then he turned to Nasrullah and said, "See you are sitting in my office and a minister can't come in. Now stop your protests and your court case." Nasrullah had only two questions: It has been a year since you told us about the investigation. How long does it take to complete an investigation? And if the investigation is continuing can there be any kind of contact with Ali Asghar? Maybe a phone call.

The good brigadier agreed. There will be a phone call. Nasrullah's family didn't have a phone at home. He gave their neighbor's phone number. And that just proved to be another step in Bungalzai's family's continuing misfortune. There was a call, the callers said they were calling from the army, can they call your neighbor Daad Khan.

The person who picked up the phone got scared and put the phone down. If you are neighbours with someone who has been missing for three years, you can be forgiven for being scared of anonymous army callers asking about your neighbours. Brigadier Siddique retired in 2004 and abruptly disappeared from the scene. A new Brigadier came in who met Nasrullah once and said that he hadn't taken proper charge, and will get back to them after he had settled into his new job.

The new Brigadier never took their calls after that first meeting. Their hopes were fading in Quetta. They decided to go to the source of their miseries. Hafiz Husain Ahmad promised to arrange a meeting with a General in Rawalpindi. Nasrullah's father Daad Khan arranged money to buy four air tickets and they arrived in Islamabad. They stayed at Hafiz Hussain Ahmed's parliament lodge. Hafiz took them to meet a certain General Zaki: they repeated their demands. You have our man. How long do you need to investigate him?

Bring him to a court, let us meet him. General Zaki picked up the phone and called up his man in Quetta. General Zaki's message was clear: Yes, there is a problem. But that problem is not here in Pindi. It's in Quetta. Go back, Brigadier Nisar will meet you. He will help you out. They came back to Quetta, met Brigadier Nisar who didn't help them.

Nasrullah got together other families with missing persons and set up a protest camp outside Quetta Press Club. He also went back to Balochistan High Court. The High Court again ordered that the police should register an FIR. Nasrullah produced the earlier court order that had said exactly the same thing. And four years after Ali Asghar's abduction there was still no FIR. "Are we not human beings?" Nasrullah pleaded in the High Court. "Why can't you get the police to register a simple case?"

Jam Yusuf, the then chief minister of Balochistan, found the protest camp in Quetta very embarrassing for his government. He didn't really find the issue of missing persons embarrassing, just their families camped in the middle of the provincial capital. He made an offer. Stop the protests and your problem will be solved.

Nasrullah consulted with the other families, they all refused. Jam Yusuf made another generous offer: Leave your tent standing, but don't protest, stay home and your problem will be solved. Nasrullah refused the offer. The local Intelligence Bureau chief tried to intervene.

He had the same demand. "Pack up the protest camp, go home and we'll try to help you," he told Nasrullah. "Give it to me in writing and I'll call off the protest." Nasrullah replied. The IB director said he'll have to check with his ISI counterpart. He picked up the phone and made a call and then waited and waited.

Nobody on the other side picked up the phone. The IB chief shouted: "These motherfuckers don't even pick up my phone and then expect me to solve the problems they have created. They are giving us a bad name." The Balochistan Governor Ovais Ghani gave Nasrullah a patient hearing. "The Governor told me that he had spoken to Brigadier Siddique who had told him categorically that they have never picked up anyone, that Ali Asghar wasn't in their custody."

After years of admission this was the first time that a responsible man in the government was telling Nasrullah that they didn't have his uncle. Ovais Ghani made the same demand that everybody else had made: Stop the protests, go home. Nasrullah suggested what he thought was a simple solution: Call in Brigadier Siddique and Colonel Bangash. Let them say in our presence that they don't have my uncle. Let them deny that they didn't tell us that they had picked him up. Do it and you can solve this problem in half an hour.

Governor Ovais Ghani thought over it. "I can't call in the Corps Commander," Ghani said. "But I am sure I can call in a colonel or brigadier. I'll arrange a meeting."

That meeting never took place. Instead he got a call from the local MI office where he told the Colonel and his fellow officers that nobody just abandons their man. "There are many ways a man can die," he told them and demanded that if Ali Asghar was dead, he should be led to a grave or if he was alive he should be produced in a court. The only concrete thing he took away from the three hour long meeting was the Colonel's claim: If we had killed him, you would have found his body.

After his encounter with the MI, Nasrullah was called in again to meet Governor Ovais Ghani. Having probably realized the limitations of the



powers of his office, the Governor was forthright. "If you continue your protests, I can't guarantee your safety," he said. Nasrullah was stunned. "I sat there and for ten minutes didn't utter a single word," he says. The Governor implored him to speak. "Son, say something." For once Nasrullah was bitter. "I told him I am a common citizen. You are the governor. We are sitting in your Governor House and you are threatening me about my safety."

All Governor Ghani had to say in his defense was that Nasrullah and his fellow protestors' activities were giving the government a bad name. A high official from the interior ministry flew down to Quetta and met with Nasrullah.

"He promised us that if we remove the protest camp, he'll make sure that Ali Asghar would be released within two weeks. He told us that he'd be released somewhere near the border and we'll just have to claim that he had spent all these years abroad." Governor Ghani's threat and the interior ministry official's promise worked. Nasrullah consulted other families and the protest camp was temporarily closed down.

Two months passed. Then four months passed. They took their protest to Islamabad, they tried to contact the man from the interior ministry who had promised Ali Asghar's release. It became quite obvious to them that they had been lied to. The FIR for Ali Asghar's abduction was registered ten years after he had been picked up from Quetta. It happened after a Supreme Court ruling.

Brigadier Siddique, Colonel Bangash and the then Corps Commander Quetta Abdul Qadir Zehri were nominated as the main accused. Three months ago, the Supreme Court asked the Balochistan IG to arrest Brigadier Siddique. The police submitted they had written to the Home Secretary of KPK, where Brigadier Siddique currently lives. They are still waiting to hear from KPK's Home Secretary.

If the accused Brigadier is indeed arrested and formally charged with the abduction of Ali Asghar, it'll be a first. Nasrullah has seen enough of this in his decade long struggle with Pakistan's supreme judiciary. It can call in civilian bureaucrats and politicians in power but when it comes to dealing with the serving or even retired army officers, it gets cold feet.

This is one line that all our powerful judiciary still can't cross. "If an elected Prime Minister doesn't obey the judiciary what happens to him? Judiciary

sends him home. But they can't force a retired Brigadier to come and face charges." Nasrullah is quite convinced that the only way to get justice for the victims of kill and dump policy and stop more people from disappearing is to bring culprits before the courts. "You just can't stop them without hauling the Majors and Colonels before the court. Okay, if you can't punish them, if you can't send them to jail, stop their promotions. Take away their benefits and then everyone will spill all their dirty secrets. And others will learn."

Ten years ago when Ali Asghar was picked up, Nasrullah was twenty three year old and a college student. He dropped out of college to look after Ali Asghar's eight children and to campaign for his release.

In ten years of struggle he has only twice heard first hand news about his uncle, on both occasions from other political workers who were doing their time in the Army's dungeons. Gul Mohammed Bugti, who came back after seven and half years, had seen Ali Asghar in a lock-up in Quetta cantonment. Then another prisoner who was arrested from Turbat and then flown to Rawalpindi in a helicopter spent some time with Ali Asghar in a small jail type place in a Pindi cantonment. "He was in good health, the torture had stopped but they were just keeping him. Ali Asghar wasn't sure if they would let him go at some point or kill and dump him as they have done with the others."

When Ali Asghar disappeared, his oldest son was twelve and the youngest one only six months old. After spending eleven years in search of his uncle, Nasrullah is quite frank about his own state of mind. "The whole family has psychological problems. I think we are all mentally sick." Despite Bungalzai family's continuing ordeal, the business of living must go on. Ali Asghar's oldest son got married a few years ago. "The whole family was together and then someone mentioned Ali Asghar' name and started to cry.

"Then everyone started to cry. We all cried for one whole week. Never in my life have I seen so many people crying so much." Their house is full of Ali Asghar's pictures they use at protest camps and rallies. In his absence Ali Asghar has become a grandfather. "His grandson also calls him Chacha because I refer to him as Chacha.

The kid looks at these pictures and asks me: when will Chacha come home? Whenever I go to Islamabad he tells me, you will bring Chacha home this time."

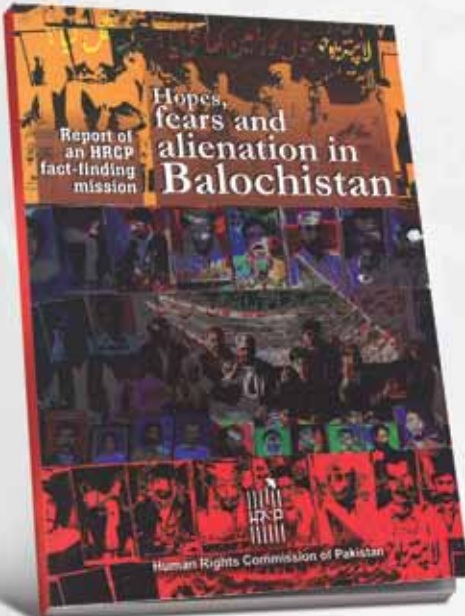
Nasrullah gives a pause as if trying not to get carried away by his emotions. “You know what his daughter said to me recently?”

“What?” I said.

Then he changed his mind. “No,” he said, shaking his head. “It’s too much. I can’t tell you. I don’t want to start crying.”



**Mohammed Hanif** is a journalist and the author of two novels, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*.



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[www.hrcp-web.org](http://www.hrcp-web.org)