

GENEVA: The United Nations human rights office today urged the Pakistani Government to investigate numerous reports of abductions, disappearances and extrajudicial killings, particularly of journalists. Since 2007, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

has received numerous reports of such human rights violations, spokesperson Rupert Colville told reporters in Geneva.

In the past week alone, it received reports on the killing of one journalist, Munir Shakir, in the western province of Balochistan on 14 August, and the disappearance of another journalist, Rehmatullah Darpakhel, three days earlier in North Waziristan on 11 August.

“We are very concerned that such incidents are not abating in Pakistan,” Mr. Colville said. “We call on all responsible parties to immediately stop such violations of human rights, and we urge the Government to take immediate steps to independently investigate these cases.”

He noted that Pakistan is cited by various journalist groups as one of the most dangerous, if not the most dangerous, places for media professionals, with at least 16 journalists killed in 2010. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), nine journalists have been killed in Pakistan so far this year.

“None of the cases have been investigated to the full,” said Mr. Colville.

He added that in Balochistan alone, there were reports that 25 people, including journalists, writers, students and human rights defenders, have been subject to extrajudicial killings within the first four months of 2011.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay spoke out back in March about the escalating trend of violations against journalists, human rights defenders, and political activists in Balochistan.

A report issued in June by Pakistan’s human rights commission revealed 143 cases of disappearances in Balochistan, including journalists, as of May this year. The same report listed 140 missing persons who were found dead in Balochistan between July 2010 and May 2011.