

New York - Two Pakistani journalists who captured images of apparent military violence against unarmed foreigners and a local man are being threatened, their colleagues told. The threats have come amid calls from high-ranking Pakistani military leaders to quell public criticism

of their policies, made at a Thursday meeting of top level commanders.

According to Pakistani journalists, Abdul Salam Soomro of the Sindhi-language television station Awaz has received anonymous death threats after his footage of an apparently unarmed teenage boy being killed by paramilitary troops in Karachi was shown nationally. Public protests and criticism from political leaders forced President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday to order an investigation into the killing, according to The New York Times.

A Quetta-based photojournalist, Jamal Tarakai, who also works for INVAB Media, photographed members of the army-organized Frontier Constabulary shooting five unarmed foreigners in Quetta on May 17. The military said the group was initially believed to be made up of Chechens on a suicide bombing mission. Tarakai's pictures were widely distributed, and he testified before a tribunal investigating the incident, which happened in Kharotabad, Quetta. Quetta is the capital of the deeply troubled Baloch province, where the army has been carrying out a harsh campaign to suppress a rising separatist movement. The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Human Rights called the incident "a serious human rights violation."

Invab Media's Chief Photojournalist Jamal Tarakai is receiving constant threats since he has spread the photos of the Kharotabad incident. Now a days he is hiding from one place to another to find some security but we are not confirm whether he will survive or not. This is the second incident particularly targeting Invab Media's employees.

At a widely reported meeting of high-ranking military commanders on Thursday, officers accused unspecified "agents" of deliberately maligning the country's armed forces. The English-language daily Dawn reported that, in a press release, the "twenty-odd commanders led by their chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, sent out a clear message: 'All of us should take cognizance of this unfortunate trend (of slandering the army) and put an end to it.'"

"In the current political climate in Pakistan, there is every reason to fear for the safety of Abdul Salam Soomro and Jamal Tarakai," said Bob Dietz, CPJ's Asia program coordinator. "There have long been fissures between Pakistan's military and civilian society, and the security apparatus has often been a prime suspect in some of the attacks that have plagued journalists for decades. We call on the Pakistani government to investigate the source of these threats and to ensure the safety of Salam and Tarakai."

On May 3, World Press Freedom Day, CPJ met with President Ali Asif Zardari, Interior Minister Rehman Malik, Minister of Information and Broadcasting Firdous Ashiq Awan, and other members of the presidential staff.

The CPJ delegation called for investigations into the 15 targeted killings that CPJ has recorded since the 2002 murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. Pearl's death has been the only murder of a journalist in Pakistan that CPJ has investigated and prosecuted that CPJ has on record since 1992. At the meeting with CPJ, Zardari pledged to address the problem, and Malik's office promised to look into CPJ's list of killed journalists. So far, there has been no response or action taken by the government.

Credits: CPJ and Staff Reporters