AfP Affirms Solidarity With Gulalai Ismail

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CONTACT

Liz Hume, Vice President of AfP | lhume@allianceforpeacebuilding.org

The Alliance for Peacebuilding Affirms Solidarity with Gulali Ismail, Co-Founder of Aware Girls in Pakistan

Washington, D.C., USA. – The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) expresses grave concern and solidarity with Gulalai Ismail, a celebrated peace activist in Pakistan who has been accused of criminal acts by the Pakistan government. Gulalai is the Co-Founder of Aware Girls in Pakistan, a young women-led non-government organization that works for the empowerment of young women and gender equality in Pakistan. Aware Girls is also a committed and dynamic member of AfP, a non-partisan global network of 100-plus organizations working to end violent conflict and sustain peace.

On 22 May 2019, the Pakistan government registered criminal cases against Gulalai Ismail accusing her of incitement of violence against state institutions and
delivering a seditious speech. These charges came soon after Gulalai spoke at a public rally and called for state accountability following the rape and murder of a 10-year-old girl named Farishta. Many had taken to the streets to protest the police’s lack of response, and Gulalai implored law enforcement agencies to pursue the case and bring justice to Farishta’s family.

For years, Gulalai has worked for equality and rule of law in Pakistan since founding Aware Girls as a teenager. Aware Girls is a model peacebuilding organization: a strong and energetic community of young women committed to peace. As the mission explains, Aware Girls aims to “strengthen the leadership capacity of young women, enabling them to act as agents of social change and [women’s] empowerment in their communities.” Aware Girls has also created a “Youth Peace Network” to promote coexistence and nonviolence, assisted with election monitoring, and educated thousands of young women in health and HIV/AIDS prevention. Gulalai has dedicated her life to empowering young men and women and bridging divides and is not in any way involved in criminal acts.

Unfortunately, Gulalai is not alone in facing political repression and repercussions for working on human rights and development in Pakistan. The shrinking civic space in the last few years has impeded the operations of individuals and organizations who are working across the country for the betterment of the Pakistani people. AfP deplores efforts by the Pakistani government to intimidate Gulalai and other activists who are using peaceful means to build just and inclusive societies. We are proud to count Aware Girls as a member of AfP and inspired by the work of Gulalai and all other peacebuilders in Pakistan working under difficult and dangerous conditions.

Underscoring Gulalai’s commitment to peaceful action to affect positive change, we call for her protection and dismissal of any politically motivated charges against her for engaging in peaceful action to build a more just and inclusive Pakistan.

Please sign the Avaaz petition

With over 110 member organizations, AfP brings together the largest development organizations, most innovative academic institutions, and influential humanitarian and faith-based groups to harness collective action for peace. We build coalitions in key areas of strategy and policy to elevate the entire peacebuilding field, tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.