World Baloch Organisation Billboards go up around London calling for an end to Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan.

Thursday 20 June, 2019

London, United Kingdom — Human rights campaigners from the World Baloch Organisation and the Baloch Republican Party continue their campaign to highlight the dire human rights situation in Pakistan. In their latest initiative, Roadside billboards have been put up around the city of London with slogans " Help end enforced disappearances in Pakistan" bringing the world's attention towards the grave issue.

Bhawal Mengal from the World Baloch Organisation said "This is a call for help, our people need help, we need someone to put their foot down and say enough is enough, Baloch, Sindhi, Pashtun, Mohajirs and religious minorities in Pakistan have the right to live without oppression . Mothers, sisters and daughters weep for their loved ones not knowing if they are dead or alive. It is not only the victim that suffers but the entire family, not knowing the whereabouts of their loved ones for years or in most cases for ever". Mengal's uncle Assaudullah Mengal was one of the first victims of enforced disappearances in 1974 at the hands of state forces, never to be seen again.

The billboards have gone up on major motorways and tourist spots around the city including Westminster where the Parliament House is located. This comes as the UK hosts the quadrennial ICC cricket world cup attracting thousands of cricket fans to the country . The activists hope to grab the attention of Londoners and those who have gathered from all around the world to witness the event.

According to the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, an entity established by the Pakistani government, 5000 cases of enforced disappearances have been registered since 2014. Most of them are still unresolved. Independent local and international human rights organizations put the numbers much higher. 20,000 have reportedly been abducted only from Balochistan, out of which more than 2,500 have turned up dead as bullet riddled dead bodies, bearing signs of extreme torture.

Teenage Ali Haider Baloch, who started protesting for the release of his missing father as a child 10 years ago, has himself become a victim of enforced disappearances on Wednesday at the hands of state authorities.

"The cases of enforced disappearances continue unabated as we campaign for an end to this heinous crime against humanity", said Abdul Bugti, a spokesman of the BRP, adding "there is hardly any household in Balochistan which has not lost a member as a result of enforced disappearances".

Earlier, in January 2014 a mass grave was discovered in Tootak area of Khuzdar. 167 bodies were recovered from the site. Human rights organisations believed the bodies belonged to previously abducted individuals who were killed and dumped however the recovered bodies were later buried by authorities without any DNA testing.

Pakistan's establishment has been long criticized over its practice of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings by International bodies and local human rights organisations that dare to speak out on the issue. Before being elected as Prime Minister, Imran Khan had admitted in multiple TV interviews the involvement of Pakistan's intelligence agencies in enforced disappearances and extra judicial killings and vowed to resign if he was unable to put an end to the practice, holding those involved responsible. Families of the abducted victims have long been protesting for the safe recovery of their loved ones in the provincial capital Quetta, and their protest camp has now completed more than 3500 days.

The organizers of the campaign have long been engaged in efforts to highlight the worsening human rights situation in Balochistan at international platforms, organising events around Europe and in the United States, focusing on advocacy activities in the European Parliament, the US parliamentary houses, and the United Nations.

The WBO and the BRP are non-violent and democratic organisations led by Baloch individuals, dedicated to raising awareness of the dire situation of human rights in Balochistan.

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