



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **SAMDEN urges Pakistan govt to act swiftly in killing of TV anchor**

**New Delhi, September 8** – The South Asia Media Defenders Network (SAMDEN) today called on Pakistani authorities to take firm action in the killing of Shaheena Shaheen, a TV talk show host and editor, in Balochistan province.

Police in the Balochi town of Turbat said that they were hunting for Ms. Shaheen's husband, Nawabzada Mehrab Khan Gichki, who allegedly fired at her on Saturday at a relative's home. The motive for the alleged shooting was not known. Ms Shaheen worked for Pakistan television and edited a local Baloch magazine called Dazghar.

“We urge the provincial government of Balochistan and authorities in Pakistan to take strong action to bring the killer/s of Ms. Shaheen to justice,” the network said.

Pakistan was ranked 145 of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Sans Frontiers, which measures the safety and freedom of journalists and media worldwide. This was a little below India, which was placed at 142. Bangladesh was ranked 151.

Ms Shaheen was murdered a day after the third anniversary of the killing of Gauri Lankesh, a leading Karnataka editor and journalist, shot down outside her home in Bengaluru.

“At a time when freedom of expression spaces are shrinking everywhere, this is another reminder of the fragility of life, the risk that media professionals face when they take a stand in any part of the world,” commented the then-newly formed SAMDEN about the assassination of Ms Lankesh.

The situation of independent media has shown little improvement, notes SAMEN today.

The Network stands in support with Pakistani journalist associations like Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and the Rural Media Network Pakistan who are demanding that the perpetrator be arrested



and a judicial commission constituted to probe the matter. The Rural Media Network notes that last November, another man killed his journalist wife Arooj Iqbal, in Lahore, capital of Punjab province.

Founded in 2017 and anchored in the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), SAMDEN has seven co-conveners including Hazarika and a membership of over 60 media professionals across South Asia. It seeks to support media workers by helping them work securely, monitoring intimidation and attacks against freedom of expression, and pressing for greater openness and accountability.

The other conveners are **Kanak Mani Dixit**, founding editor, Himal South Asian; **Mahfuz Anam**, editor, The Daily Star, Dhaka; **Salil Tripathi**, Chair, PEN International's Writers in Prison Committee; **Beena Sarwar**, Boston-based journalist, film maker and media teacher; **Kalpana Sharma**, senior journalist and author; and **Kumar Lopez**, Executive Director, the Sri Lanka Press Institute.

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