

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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September 22, 2008

The Hon. Michael Chertoff
Secretary of Homeland Security
US Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Via Facsimile: 202-282-9188

Re: Revocation of Visa of Amina Masood Janjua

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

We are writing to express grave concern over the revocation of the US visa of Amina Masood Janjua, a widely respected Pakistani human rights advocate. Mrs. Janjua was scheduled to travel from Geneva to Washington, DC, on September 12, 2008, but at the last moment the US Embassy in Islamabad informed her that her US visa had been rescinded.

As you may know, Mrs. Janjua has done courageous and groundbreaking work to draw attention to the plight of the “disappeared” in Pakistan. Her work on this issue began when her husband Masood Ahmed Janjua went missing on July 30, 2005. Like hundreds of others who have “disappeared” in Pakistan in recent years, he is believed to have been seized by the Pakistani security forces and held in illegal, secret detention. Our research indicates that many such detainees were transferred to US custody—either CIA or military custody—and many others were interrogated by US officials while held secretly by Pakistani forces.

Despite the personal dangers involved in protesting these abuses, Amina Masood Janjua established an advocacy group, Defense of Human Rights, that has brought together the family members of missing people in Pakistan, and has been at the forefront of efforts to seek information about the fate of the “disappeared.” It was in large part thanks to their work that a number of secretly detained people in Pakistan were released or otherwise reappeared last year.

At the invitation of Amnesty International, Mrs. Janjua was planning to meet with members of Congress and other interested officials in Washington, DC, to provide her perspective on developments in Pakistan. The revocation of her visa leaves the clear impression that, at a moment when United States relations with Pakistan are a matter

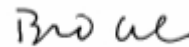
of vital public importance, the US government wants to restrict the dissemination of viewpoints that differ from its own. Such an approach violates the fundamental right of Americans to receive and exchange opinions and ideas with others, and is reminiscent of the politically-motivated visa denials that characterized the Cold War. It will also reinforce negative views of the US government in Pakistan, reducing the public support the United States needs to advance important regional objectives, including promoting human rights and curtailing terrorism.

We respectfully request that you reconsider this decision without delay.

Sincerely yours,



Joanne Mariner
Terrorism and Counterterrorism Director



Brad Adams
Asia Director

Cc: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice