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Pakistani American Press Association demands journalist Gohar Wazir's Release

WASHINGTON:

The Pakistani American Press Association (PAPA) urged Pakistani authorities on Wednesday to immediately and unconditionally release Gohar Wazir, a reporter with private satellite Television station "Khyber News".

In a statement issued in Washington, PAPA noted that Wazir was arrested along with 21 other people under the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance, which allows for preventive detention for up to six months. PAPA feels that this law does not apply to Wazir as he was not involved in any activity aimed at disturbing public order.

PAPA also referred to Pakistani media reports that security officials arrested Wazir in Bannu on Tuesday after he reported on demonstrations of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM). On Monday, he interviewed Moshin Dawar, a prominent PTM leader who was elected to Pakistan's National Assembly last year. PAPA reminded authorities that journalists are required to cover rallies, no matter who holds them. Similarly, interviewing political figures, particularly an elected representative, is also a part of a journalist's duties. "Gohar Wazir should not have to face arrest for doing his job of reporting the news," said PAPA President Asad Hasan. "He should be released without any delay."

PAPA noted that journalists in Pakistan work in a dangerous environment. Often, they are not even paid their salaries and are targeted by both militants and government officials. Many journalists have also been killed while performing their duties. Although the killing of journalists has declined in Pakistan in recent years, media advocacy groups have documented a rising trend of press curbs, including self-censorship.

For more information, visit <http://www.pakuspress.org/>
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Sincerely
The Elected Body
Pakistani American Press Association

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