

PRESS STATEMENT: Feb 23, 2026

40+ International Scholars and Public Figures Issue Urgent Humanitarian Appeal Over Detention and Medical Care of Imran Khan

A broad group of international scholars, artists, elected officials, jurists, journalists, faith leaders, and human-rights advocates has issued a humanitarian appeal expressing concern over the reported medical condition and treatment in custody of former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan.

The signatories warn that credible reports indicate serious deterioration in his health, including significant ocular damage allegedly linked to delays in medical treatment while detained. The appeal calls for immediate independent medical access, transparency regarding his condition, and adherence to domestic legal protections and internationally recognized standards governing the treatment of detainees.

The statement emphasizes that the appeal is humanitarian in nature and not directed toward political outcomes. Rather, it underscores that international legal norms and basic human-rights principles require that all detainees — regardless of political affiliation or legal status — be treated with dignity, afforded due process, and provided adequate medical care.

Among those endorsing the call are internationally recognized figures including Her Excellency Minister Dr. Naledi Pandor, Roger Waters, Dr. Vijay Prashad, Prof. John L. Esposito, Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan, Prof.. Norman Finkelstein, Dr. Nader Hashemi, Craig Mokhiber; Motasem Ahmad Dalloul; Katie Halper; Dr. Nidal Jboor; Medea Benjamin, Dr. Riffat Hassan, Prof. Sami A. Al-Arian, Dr. Ashok Swain, Turgay Evren, Prof. Richard Falk, Prof. Ilan Pappé, Dr. Assal Rad, Prof. Tamara Sonn, Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, Prof. Junaid Ahmad, Connecticut State Senator Saud Anwar, Tariq Ali, ; Dr. Ammar Ali Jan, Susan Abulhawa, Sabrina Salvati, Rev. Dr. Allan Boesak, Sheikh Imran Hosain, Dr. Charles Amjad-Ali, Kathy Kelly, Dr. Ranjan Solomon, Miko Peled, Dr. Sabreena Ghaffar-Siddiqui, Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Pakistan, Prof. Rasul Bakhsh Rais, Maria Kari, and other members of international civil society.

The signatories have called for:

- Immediate access to independent specialist medical care
- Full transparency regarding his health condition and medical records
- Humane conditions of detention consistent with domestic law and international human-rights obligations
- Respect for due process and legal protections

Organizers state that preparations are also underway to form an international humanitarian delegation composed of respected global personalities that would seek meetings with relevant Pakistani authorities to encourage medical transparency and compliance with human-rights standards.

The initiative is supported by the Community Alliance for Peace & Justice, the Coalition to Change U.S. Policy on Pakistan, and the Center for the Study of Islam & Decolonization.

The organizers stress that the protection of fundamental rights of detainees is a universal humanitarian concern and that medical care in custody should never become a matter of political dispute.

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Global Civil Society Speaks out for Imran Khan

More Than 40 Leading public intellectuals, academics and activists around the world sign a letter calling for Imran Khan's release and urgent access to his family and physicians



Signatories include: Norman Finkelstein, Dr. Naledi Pandor, John I. Esposito, D. Yanis Varoufakis, Noura Erakat, Dr. Omid Safi, Dr. Yasir Qadhi, Roger Waters, Dr. Vijay Prashad, Dr. Nader Hashemi, Mr. Craig Mokhiber, Mr. Motasem Dalloul, Katie Halper, Dr. Nidal Jboor, Medea Benjamin, Dr. Ashok Swain, Turgay Evren, Dr. Richard Falk, Dr. Ilan Pappé, Dr. Assal Rad, Dr. Tamara Sonn, Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, Dr. Junaid Ahmad, State Senator Saud Anwar, Tariq Ali, Fawzia Afzal-Khan, Ammar Ali Jan, Riffat Hussain, Susan Abulhawa, Sabrina Salvati, Assal Rad, Allan Boesak, Sheikh Imran Hosain, Charles Amjad-AliKathy, KellyRanjan, Solomon Miko Peled, Sabreena Ghaffar-Siddiqui, Community Alliance for Peace & Justice, Coalition to Change U.S. Policy on Pakistan, Center for the Study of Islam & Decolonization

An Open Letter to the U.S., EU, the Commonwealth, and the OIC: On the Medical Neglect and Arbitrary Detention of Imran Khan and other Political Prisoners

We, the undersigned diaspora organizations, civil society groups, human rights advocates, and academics, are gravely concerned about credible reports that former Prime Minister Imran Khan has suffered severe vision loss in one of his eyes while in state custody, due to extreme medical negligence. This negligence qualifies as custodial torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment according to international human rights standards. Every detainee has the right to adequate medical care while in prison and the state's failure to provide it in a timely manner is a gross violation of Pakistani law as well as the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, to which Pakistan is a signatory.

This alarming development must be understood within the larger context of Imran Khan's almost three-year incarceration – deemed arbitrary, unjust and politically motivated by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which in 2024 called for his immediate release. The de facto government, which came to power after an election that experts deem the most rigged in Pakistan's history, has routinely denied his family, lawyers, and personal physicians access to Imran Khan despite court-mandated orders. Imran Khan is kept in solitary confinement for extended periods of time and calls by international human rights organizations and the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture to “ensure that Khan's conditions of detention fully comply with international norms and standards” have largely gone unheeded.

Imran Khan's mistreatment is part of a broader pattern of state repression against the political opposition, human rights defenders, civil society activists, lawyers, and journalists. Since the removal of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in April 2022, the country has witnessed an extraordinary crackdown on dissent. Political leaders and workers have been jailed in large numbers. Peaceful protest has been met with force. Journalists have been silenced or driven into exile. Lawyers and human rights defenders have been intimidated and detained. Courts face mounting pressure. The space for free expression has narrowed to a point unseen in decades.

The prosecution, intimidation, and imprisonment of thousands of political activists, individuals such as Mahrang Baloch, who has peacefully advocated for the rights of the Baloch community, and human rights lawyer Imaan Mazari, who has represented political detainees and spoken out against abuses, signal a dangerous erosion of judicial independence and constitutional protections.

In light of the seriousness of these developments, we call for:

- Mr. Khan's immediate release consistent with the findings of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, as well as Pakistan's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Mr. Khan's immediate access to his personal ophthalmological specialist, as any further delays in treatment could result in irreversible ocular damage, and full disclosure of his medical records to family and counsel
- An end to prolonged isolation practices and compliance with all court directives
- An end to the misuse of anti-terrorism laws and military trials against civilians
- Protection of lawyers and activists from politically motivated prosecution and an immediate review of the cases brought against lawyers and human rights defenders

We urge governments engaged with Pakistan to raise these concerns clearly and consistently, monitor legal proceedings and detention conditions, and press for adherence to international human rights commitments.

The denial of adequate medical care to any detainee is unacceptable. When such denial appears within a broader pattern of repression, involving ignored court orders, politicized prosecutions, and the intimidation of legal professionals, it demands urgent corrective action.

This letter is led by the Community Alliance for Peace and Justice, the Coalition to Change U.S. Policy on Pakistan (CUSP), and Center for the Study of Islam and Decolonization.