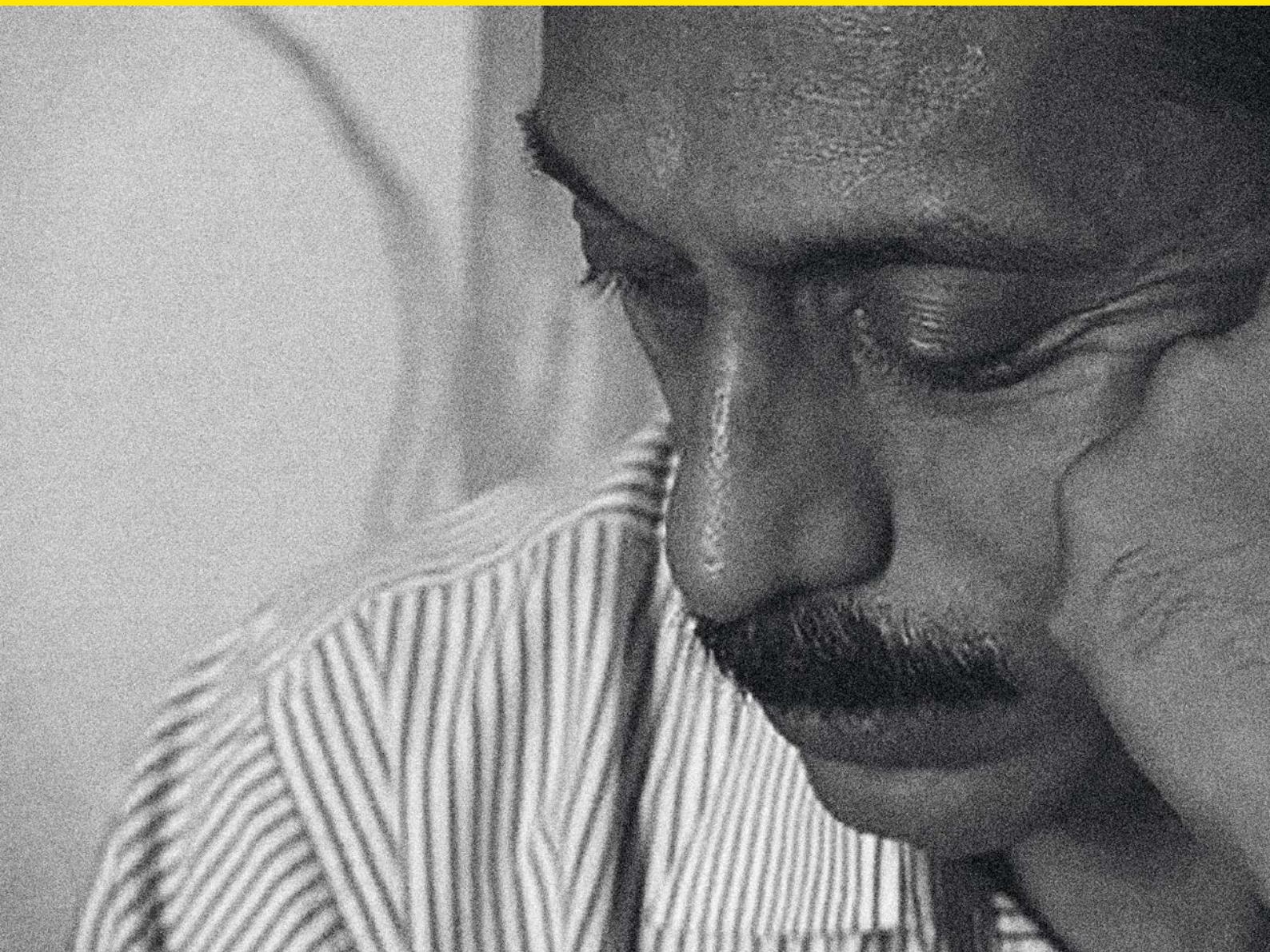


A Safer World For The Truth

Truth Denied: How Pakistani Authorities Built An Unsolvable Case



A Safer World For The Truth

A Safer World for the Truth is a collaborative initiative by Free Press Unlimited, in collaboration with the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters without Borders. A Safer World for the Truth pursues justice in cases of crimes against journalists. The project consists of a series of investigations of cases where a journalist was murdered for doing his or her job. The aim of these investigations is to bring new facts and information around the killings to light, paving the way for justice.



AUTHORS

Jules Swinkels, Jasmijn de Zeeuw, Jos Bartman, Shahzeb Ahmed and Adil Jawad Khan.

With expert input from: Advocate Aman Aftab Ejaz and Dr. Summaiya Syed.

For questions, please contact:
investigations@freepressunlimited.org

We would like to extend our deep gratitude to everyone who shared information and insights for this report.

DESIGN

Babette Hilhorst

COVER PHOTO

Family archive

COPYRIGHT

Free Press Unlimited 2025

CITATION

The report should be cited as follows:

A Safer World for the Truth (2025).

Truth Denied: How Pakistani Authorities built an Unsolvable case.

Table of **Contents**

Abbreviations	5
Executive Summary	6
1. Introduction	10
A. Context of Pakistan.	11
I. Safety of journalists	11
II. Local and political context: Larkana and Badah, Sindh Province	12
B. Zakir Hussain Dahar, an engaged journalist	13
2. The Murder	15
3. The official Investigation	17
A. The Official Murder Investigation	18
B. Official Investigation substitutes murder charges for charges related to 'accidental firing'	20
4. Free Press Unlimited's Investigation	25
A. Reconstruction of the murder based on our investigation	26
B. Medical negligence leads to Dahar's death	30
5. Flaws in the investigation point to negligence	32
A. Police were negligent during evidence collection and handling, which led to omissions and incomplete evidence	33
B. Proper procedures and laws regarding handling of suspects and witnesses were not followed	36
C. Police investigators failed to pursue leads that provide indications that Dahar could have been targeted for his work	37
6. Conclusion	40

Abbreviations

ATC - Anti-Terrorism Court

ATA - Anti-Terrorism Act

ASI - Assistant Sub-Inspector

ASJ - Additional Sessions Judge

ASP - Assistant Superintendent of Police

CMCH - Chandka Medical College Hospital (Larkana)

CMO - Chief Medical Officer

CSO - Civil Society Organizations

CDR - Call Data Records

CPJ - Committee to Protect Journalists

DPO - District Police Officer

DIG - Deputy Inspector General

FIR - First Information Report

IG - Inspector General

IHSAS - Integrated Health System Strengthening Alliance

IO - Investigation Officer

JIT - Joint Investigation Team

PC - Police Constable

PPC - Pakistan Penal Code

PPP - Pakistan People's Party

RSF - Reporters Without Borders

SHO - Station House Officer

SIO - Senior Investigation Officer

SSP - Senior Superintendent of Police

Executive Summary

Zakir Hussain Dahar, alias Shan Dahar, was a Pakistani journalist who worked in Larkana town in Sindh province, one of Pakistan's most dangerous regions for journalists. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 41 journalists have been murdered in Pakistan in direct relation to their work since 1992. Dahar was known by friends and colleagues for his unwavering commitment to objective journalism. On 1 January 2014, Shan Dahar was shot in front of a local health clinic, where he was filming and taking photographs. His murder was never solved, emphasizing the problem of impunity for crimes against journalists.

After Dahar was shot, he was taken to a hospital in Larkana, where he was left unattended by doctors for more than nine hours. He passed away in the early morning. Initially, police investigators seemed to make headway in an official murder investigation under jurisdiction of the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Larkana. But within a short time, authorities removed the murder charge and classified the incident as accidental death. An ensuing official investigation proved ineffective, and it remains unclear exactly why and when the authorities removed the murder charge. Since then, there has been uncertainty about the precise nature of and motive for the murder, and there has been no meaningful conclusion to the matter. Dahar's killers have therefore managed to evade justice for more than 11 years.

Free Press Unlimited investigated the murder of Shan Dahar in collaboration with several in-country investigative journalists and legal experts. They uncovered and analyzed dozens of court documents, witness testimonies and police records obtained by the team, and conducted interviews with friends, family, colleagues, police officers, and former suspects, during multiple factfinding trips to Badah, Larkana and Karachi.

This report is the result of more than eighteen months of collaborative cross-border investigation and analysis. During our investigation, we uncovered pieces of evidence that shed light on the motive for the murder; these were never analyzed by police investigators, and never made it into the official records. We were able to recover critical video and photographic evidence that allowed us to retrace in detail Dahar's movements on the night of his murder, shedding light on the possible motive for and circumstances of his death.

Our investigation finds three main flaws in the official investigation by the authorities. Police did not follow appropriate procedures during evidence collection and handling, neglected protocols regarding handling of witnesses and suspects, and failed to pursue alternative leads. The scope and severity of these flaws are an indication of negligence in the case of Shan Dahar. This report will discuss all of these flaws in detail, but pivots around three key findings:

First, police were negligent when it came to evidence collection and handling, which led to critical omissions, and incomplete evidence. The postmortem report and crime scene analysis were incomplete and lacked critical details, evidence was sealed and handled contrary to legal standards, there were discrepancies between public statements and official records, and pieces of evidence were either ignored or misinterpreted, leading to incomplete conclusions being drawn.

Second, procedural breaches by police authorities regarding handling of witnesses and suspects undermined the integrity of the case. Badah and Larkana police officers carried out arrests for the purpose of extortion, with individuals having to pay for their release. A senior police investigator confirmed this practice. Two absconding accused were not arrested even though they were roaming freely in the city, and the authorities' prime suspect spent at least nine days unlawfully detained before being presented in court. In parallel, critical witness testimony was either omitted, or the witnesses mishandled and coerced, ensuring that their testimonies were not properly recorded before the court, or were not recorded at all.

Third, police investigators failed to pursue leads that could have indicated that Dahar was targeted for his work, and swiftly settled on the incident being accidental. Investigators did not analyze Dahar's reporting and did not investigate threats against him. Indications that Dahar's murder could have been linked to his work, specifically his reporting on reselling of donated medications, and indications that Dahar died of medical negligence, were therefore missed.

Our key findings indicate that, had appropriate procedures and protocols been followed, the murder of Shan Dahar could have been solved. Bringing a murder case to its conclusion in a court of law in Pakistan means following strict procedures and ensuring an investigation can prove murder beyond reasonable doubt. But given the many investigative shortcomings, some due to lack of investigative capacity, others due to misconduct, it is uncertain whether justice will ever prevail. Critical evidence has been lost or compromised, and key witnesses have either passed away or are no longer traceable. Currently, the case lies dormant, because certain accused have been declared absconders while one of the accused has been acquitted by the court.

To attain justice for the relatives of Dahar, and to ensure that Pakistani investigative authorities are scrutinized and not allowed to make the same mistakes in future cases, we recommend the following:

To the Superintendent and Investigation Officer of Sindh Police:

- Conduct an independent, transparent and impartial reinvestigation of the case that includes:
 - Prompt and decisive measures to locate and apprehend the absconding accused. These measures should include conducting targeted raids, maintaining surveillance, coordinating with other police units, obtaining directives from senior police authorities, e.g. the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) or Inspector General (IG), to reinvigorate the investigation, liaising with police units in other districts or provinces where relevant, entering the absconders' particulars into the national crime database, issuing alerts, and monitoring other cases in which the absconders may appear. Without the location, arrest and questioning of the absconders, Shan Dahar's case cannot be reopened;
 - Location and interrogation of security guard and eye witness Munna Qadir Kandhro, currently residing in Karachi;
 - An independent forensic analysis on Dahar's coat to ascertain critical details about the distance of the bullet, and the angle at which the bullet entered his body;

To Pakistani political authorities:

- Collaborate with and support Safe Journalism, a civil society initiative that was founded specifically with the aim of countering impunity in cases like Shan Dahir. The Central Government has agreed, in principle, to collaborate with Safe Journalism to end impunity in murder cases. We urge the government to take the next step, and sign a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Joint Action Committee to jointly monitor investigations and prosecutions to ensure fairness.

To the Pakistan National Police:

- In collaboration with Safe Journalism, develop specialized investigative protocols for cases of murders of journalists. Such a protocol should, at least, include the following:
 - Initial investigations must be conducted by a specialized crime investigation unit or by an officer of Superintendent of Police (SP) rank or higher, to increase objectivity and transparency.
 - Guidelines for motive analysis in the work of a journalist.
 - Provide guarantees that a forensic team is dispatched in every case, regardless of location.
 - Ensure that crime scenes are properly preserved until forensic analysis is completed.
 - Provide accountability measures for officers who accidentally or intentionally contaminate evidence, and mishandle witnesses or suspects, and thereby undermine the investigation.
 - Allow for third-party scrutinization of investigations by an independent party, such as Safe Journalism. The Central Government has agreed, in principle, to collaborate with Safe Journalism to end impunity in murder cases. As such, Safe Journalism is well placed to fulfil this critical monitoring role.

To the international community:

- Continue to support Pakistani initiatives aimed at protecting journalists. Specifically, the international community should support the further development of Safe Journalism, an initiative by journalists, legal and political experts with the aim of countering impunity for murders of journalists in Pakistan. Safe Journalism collaborates with authorities to end impunity in cases of murders of journalists by increasing the strength, transparency and objectivity of investigations.

To the Sindh Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners and Federal Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Professionals:

- Explore the idea of a Joint Action Committee together with civil society partners, to assist in the implementation and execution of the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021.
- Order an inquiry into the murder of Shan Dahir, focussing on the arrest of absconders and the summoning of identified witnesses. Both commissions operate under specific legal frameworks aimed at combatting impunity for crimes against journalists, and are equipped to initiate inquiries into journalist killings, as specified under the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act 2021.

1

Introduction

This chapter first provides a brief introduction into the context of the murder by looking at political alliances, safety of journalists in Pakistan and trends regarding attacks on journalists operating away from the political centre. It then describes the life and career of Zakir Hussain Dahir, alias Shan Dahir.

A. Context Pakistan

I. Safety of journalists in Pakistan

Pakistan has a vibrant media landscape and its press is among the most outspoken in South Asia, with more than 100 TV channels and 200 radio stations.¹ Despite this perceived press freedom, there are certain issues that are deemed too dangerous to cover, such as critical coverage of the military and intelligence apparatus. On the 2025 Press Freedom Index from our partner Reporters Without Borders, Pakistan ranks 158 of 180 countries, down from 152 in 2024.²

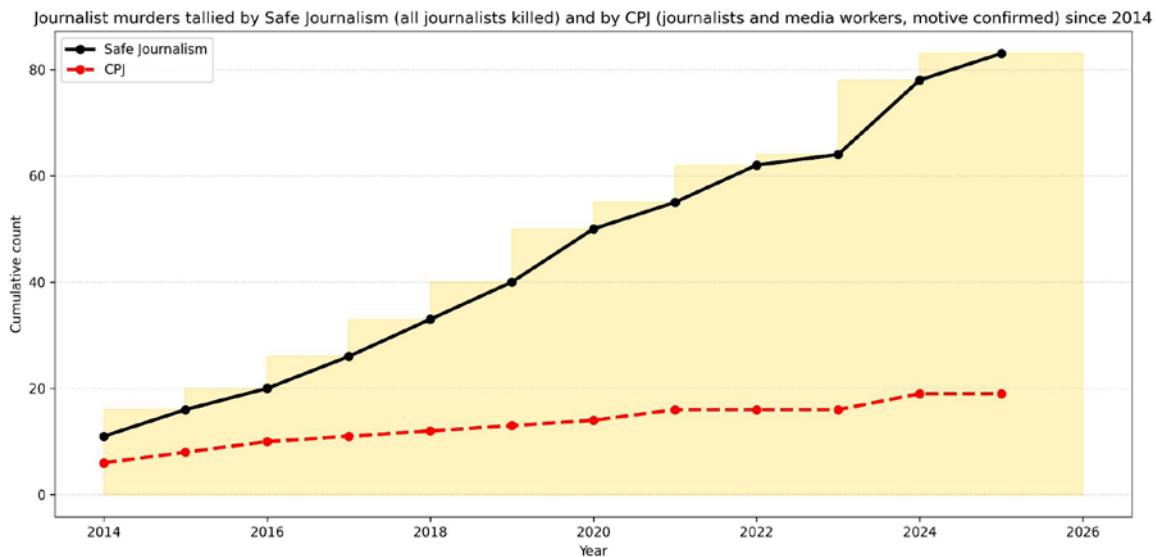
The numbers of journalists in Pakistan being threatened and attacked are alarming. In 2024, six journalists were confirmed to have been murdered in Pakistan.³ Since 1992, at least 98 journalists have been killed in Pakistan, 41 of whom were murdered in direct relation to their work, making it one of the most dangerous contexts for journalists globally.⁴ In 37 of those murder cases, no one has been held accountable, while only partial justice was achieved in the remaining 4 cases. Since 1992, not a single case of the murder of a journalist has been met with full justice.

1 Reporters Without Borders (2025). Press Freedom Index Pakistan. <https://rsf.org/en/country/pakistan>.

2 Reporters Without Borders (2025). Press Freedom Index Pakistan. <https://rsf.org/en/country/pakistan>.

3 Committee to Protect Journalists, Pakistan, 2024. https://cpj.org/data/killed/all/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&motiveUnconfirmed%5B%5D=Unconfirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&type%5B%5D=Media%20Worker&cc_fips%5B%5D=PK&start_year=2024&end_year=2024&group_by=year

4 Committee to Protect Journalists, Pakistan, 2024. https://cpj.org/data/killed/all/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&motiveUnconfirmed%5B%5D=Unconfirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&type%5B%5D=Media%20Worker&cc_fips%5B%5D=PK&start_year=2024&end_year=2024&group_by=year



This graph is based on data from both Safe Journalism, a Pakistani organization aimed at preventing impunity for journalist murders, and the Committee to Protect Journalists. It shows journalist murders in Pakistan since 2014, based on SJ's and CPJ's respective methods.

II. Local and political context: Larkana and Badah, Sindh Province

Badah is a small town with a population of around 43,000 people, located next to Dokri and approximately 40-minute driving from Larkana – one of the largest cities in Northern Sindh. Larkana is a hub of political activity thanks to its affiliation with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a former prime minister of Pakistan, and Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's first and only female prime minister. Their enduring popularity has cemented the Bhutto political dynasty's influence in the region, and their slogan, *roti, kapra aur makan* ("bread, clothing, and shelter/home"), remains emblematic of their politics. Over the last few decades, the region has therefore come to be regarded as the bastion of the Bhutto dynasty and their political party, Pakistan People's Party (PPP),⁵ who have ruled Sindh since 2008.

But in recent years, cracks have started to appear in the PPP's rule, visible in the shrinking margins of electoral victories, and in the loss of power in key towns. Years of systemic corruption, incompetence and a general apathy towards governance, previously masked by popular political leads such as Benazir Bhutto, has given people plenty of reasons to dislike the party. In the local elections in 2023 for example, the PPP did win Larkana, but lost both Dokri and Badah to Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) candidates.⁶ And yet, the PPP remains popular in Larkana and its larger region, winning 37 out of 39 National Assembly seats, and 74 out of 83 Sindh Assembly seats in the 2024 general elections.⁷

5 Faras Ghani (12 May 2017). Can the Bhuttos hold on to their heartland of Larkana? <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/5/12/can-the-bhuttos-hold-on-to-their-heartland-of-larkana>. Al Jazeera.

6 Dawn (16 June 2023). PPP wins Larkana mayoral election. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1760001>.

7 Faras Ghani (12 May 2017). Can the Bhuttos hold on to their heartland of Larkana? <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/5/12/can-the-bhuttos-hold-on-to-their-heartland-of-larkana>. Al Jazeera; The Tribune (10 February 2024). PPP clean sweeps Sindh. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2456016/ppp-clean-sweeps-sindh>.

In 2013, just before the murder of Dahar, there were 41 candidates vying for the seat of Member of Provincial Assembly from PS-41 (Larkana)⁸. Of the 41 candidates, some were affiliated with mainstream political parties such as the PPP, but the majority were independent candidates.⁹ In Larkana and neighbouring towns, while the party name carries a lot of weight, it is important for the candidate to have the right connections among feudals and local influential individuals. For example, in the more remote areas, voters align themselves with the candidate chosen by the feudal lord. In urban towns, local communities are divided along tribal or ethnic lines, whereby they vote in blocs for the candidate from within their community or someone from whom they can reap benefits.

In Badah, the PPP enjoys much support through these networks. The most important tribes in Badah include the Junejos, Sariyo, Zehri, Abbasi Samma, Solangi and Dahar.

B. Zakir Hussain Dahar, an engaged journalist

After graduating with a Masters degree in International Relations, Zakir Hussain Dahar, alias Shan Dahar, moved to Karachi, where he joined the Sindh Police as a constable. According to childhood friend Ghulam Ali,¹⁰ Dahar worked as a police constable for 10 years and would often write columns for newspapers in his free time. Ghulam Ali said Dahar used to read till late into the night and found it difficult to get up in the mornings, which is why he had to quit the police in 1991.¹¹

When Dahar quit his job with the police, he started working as a journalist for a local Sindhi daily called *Daily Awami Awaz*.¹² After a decade of working for various Sindhi and Urdu newspapers, Shan joined Indus Vision in 2001 as a documentary scriptwriter. A year later, he moved to the country's first Sindhi news channel, *KTN*, and was sent on assignment to *Dubai Media City*, where he worked for the channel as News Controller/ Producer. In 2005, he joined Sindh TV as a news producer, but quit soon after to join ARY News as an executive in the Archives & Monitoring department. In 2009, he switched jobs once again, this time joining *Dharti TV News* as director news. He also hosted a current affairs show on the same channel,



A plaque remembering Shan Dahar, near the intersection where he got shot. Photo taken by our investigators in September 2024.

8 Election results, 2013 elections. <https://www.electionpakistani.com/ge2013/ps/PS-41.htm>

9 Election results, 2013 elections. <https://www.electionpakistani.com/ge2013/ps/PS-41.htm>

10 Interview Ghulam Ali, September 2024.

11 Interview Ghulam Ali, September 2024.

12 Shan Dahar LinkedIn profile. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/shan-dahar-5959ab21/?originalSubdomain=pk>

focusing on socio-political and economic issues.¹³ In 2012, Shan Dahar moved back to Larkana with his two daughters. Starting afresh, he had little money and decided to open a shop in Badah selling chicken, before he started as bureau chief for *Abb Takk News* in Larkana. It would be his final media position.

The FPU team spoke to several of his colleagues, who said that Shan was a principled journalist, unwavering in his commitment to objective journalism. They pointed out that Shan was a courageous journalist, who never shied away from asking tough questions. "He was a man of principles," recalled colleague and friend Waqar Samo. Dahar had a lasting impact on those around him. Dahar's friend Ghulam Ali stated: "Dahar's students and fellow journalists still carry on his legacy. Many of his students are working in newsrooms today, continuing the kind of journalism he practiced. He trained many people, and they have gone on to make names for themselves."¹⁴

¹³ Interview Ghulam Ali, September 2024.

¹⁴ Interview Ghulam Ali, September 2024.

2

The Murder

On 1 January 2014, at around 12:30 AM, Shan Dahir was filming at a local health care clinic called 'City Block', and talking to two individuals working at the clinic and the pharmacy.¹⁵ Gunshots rang through the night, not unusual during Pakistan's New Year celebrations. Dahir was leaning over the counter of the pharmacy, located in front of the clinic's gate, when he was hit with a single bullet on the left side of his back. First, he was taken inside the local health care clinic, where they could not help him further. He was then moved by ambulance to Chandka Medical College Hospital (CMCH) in Larkana, where he was admitted at 02:00 AM.¹⁶

In CMCH Larkana, Dahir was attended to by night Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr. Sajjad Jalbani, Dr. Safdar Abbasi, surgical unit-II P.G. Dr. Vikraml Dr. Ali Gohar Chandio, Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Gaad, Dr. Walheed Jalbani (M-Unit-II), and Dr. Ayaz Shahani of the Cardiology department.¹⁷ According to the eventual death certificate, Dahir succumbed to his injuries in the morning, at 09:30 AM. The postmortem report, submitted on 7 January 2014, concludes that the cause of death was "hemorrhage and shock due to laceration of the spleen caused by injury."¹⁸ The postmortem report, ordered by PC Rajab Ali of Badah Police, was conducted by an unidentified Medico Legal officer of the Office of the Police Surgeon CMCH Larkana; it stated that the injury was determined to have resulted from a firearm discharge. Many questions that the postmortem could have answered, remained unanswered though. Specifically, because the postmortem did not include photographs or any information about the angle of the entry wound and blackening around the entry wound, it is difficult to provide objective information on the exact circumstances of Dahir's shooting.

15 Video and photographic evidence from Shan Dahir's devices, archived by Free Press Unlimited.

16 Death Certificate Zakir Hussain alias Shan S/O Mohammad Ibrahim Dahir, 1 January 2014.

17 Death Certificate Zakir Hussain alias Shan S/O Mohammad Ibrahim Dahir, 1 January 2014.

18 Postmortem Shan Dahir, submitted on 7 January 2014.

3

**The official
Investigation**

In this chapter we first recount the official story of the murder as shared by investigative authorities in Pakistan. We will summarize the key actions that were taken by the authorities, family members of Dahar and press freedom CSOs up to the time our investigation started in late 2023.

A. The Official Murder Investigation

Riaz Hussain, Shan Dahar's brother-in-law, filed a First Information Report (FIR)¹⁹ regarding the death of Shan Dahar immediately after the murder, on 2 January 2014.²⁰ FIR No. 1 of 2014, dated 2 January 2014, was lodged under section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), and Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997, against unknown accused persons.

The complainant states in the FIR, that he received a call around 1:00 am on 1 January, 2014, from his cousin Sajid Ali Pathan, informing him that Dahar had suffered a gunshot wound and had been taken urgently to the hospital in Larkana.²¹ According to Hussain's statement in the FIR, Shan Dahar briefly regained consciousness during the night, and indicated 'the Zehri community' as his attackers during this brief moment of consciousness.²² The FIR was registered by the Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of Badah Police Station, who is not identified in the documentation in our possession.

On the same day, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Khokhar told Dawn that "the murderer would soon be arrested" as the journalist had disclosed the name of the perpetrator to his close friends before his death. He stated that "the suspected killer, in the words of the late journalist, belonged to the Zahri (Zehri) Brohi clan."²³

In the week of 2 January 2014, Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) Syed Abdul Hakeem Shah of Badah Police Station, along with other officers, collected blood-stained earth from the crime scene in a used cigarette pack, sealed it up and sent it to a chemical laboratory. SIO Shah then went to several "respectable persons" in the area to request assistance in finding the accused persons. Finally, he ordered a sketch of the crime scene to be made and submitted to the case file.²⁴ The analysis of the blood-stained earth and the sketch of the crime scene were not part of the case files our team was able to recover.

"The suspected killer, in the words of the late journalist, belonged to the Zahri (Zehri) Brohi clan."

19 Under Section 154 Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.

20 The First Information Report 01/2014 u/s/302 rw 6/7 Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997.

21 First Information Report FIR No. 01/2014 u/s 302 PPC, 6/7 Anti-Terrorism Act PS Badeh, District Larkana.

22 First Information Report FIR No. 01/2014 u/s 302 PPC, 6/7 Anti-Terrorism Act PS Badeh, District Larkana.

23 Dawn (2 January 2014). Senior journalist shot dead in Larkana. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1077860/senior-journalist-shot-dead-in-larkana>.

24 Case Diary - 25 (64-1). Case Crime No. 01/2014, Offence U/s. 302 PPC., 6/7 ATA. Diary No. 1.

On 4 January 2014, after repeated and consistent requests by Dahar's family for a strong and independent investigation to be performed, the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Larkana ordered the creation of a joint investigation team (JIT) comprising of ASP Larkana City, Mr. Sajid Khokhar, Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Hyderi Mr. Mehar Ali Jageerani, SDPO Dokri, and Station House Officer (SHO) Badah Police, Mr. Noor Ahmed Mugheri.²⁵ At this point, the JIT took over the case from SIO Shah.

A single bullet was recovered from the body of Dahar by an unidentified medico legal officer and sent for analysis. On 17 January 2014, the Forensic Division Larkana submitted its analysis of the bullet received on 16 January 2014, which concluded that the bullet was a "30 bore bullet"(7.62 mm), fired from an unidentified pistol.²⁶

In the first weeks after the murder, from 2 to 20 January 2014, investigators submitted nine case diaries that were all similar, describing basic investigative actions such as visiting "respectable persons" or "talking to spies".²⁷ This is common in investigations in Pakistan; our investigators noticed the same pattern while investigating the murder case of journalist Zubair Mujahid.²⁸

On 4 February 2014, *Dawn* reported that police had arrested six suspects and recovered three 30 "bore" pistols (.30 caliber, or 7.62 mm in metric terms) from their possession. The six suspects were identified as Nasrullah Tunio, Kamran Bhatti, Sajjad Bhatti, Aamir Abro, Karo Channo and Ghulam Abbas Bhatti.²⁹ According to the authorities, the six had celebrated the new year with celebratory aerial gunfire.

In the months following the murder, police detained in total around 20 young men from the neighborhood where Shan had been shot. Our team was unable to verify the exact number of arrestees because not all of the arrested were booked. Among the arrested were the owner of the pharmacist where Dahar had been standing, Zulfiqar Kalhoro and the security guard of the City Block health facility, Munna Qadir Kandhro, who had been facing Shan when the incident occurred and who was identified by Kalhoro as the only eyewitness to the incident.³⁰

Despite all these arrests, only three testimonies were recorded under Section 164 CrPC (statements before the judicial magistrate) in the first months after the murder:

- Riaz Hussain, complainant, cousin of the victim and husband of the sister of Shan Dahar (see FIR above for his testimony). Riaz was not an eyewitness nor was he anywhere near the event;
- Sajid Ali Pathan, whose statement was recorded on 4 February 2014. He testified that he was passing Channa Muhalla street (near the crime scene) at approximately 12:30 AM when he observed several intoxicated boys celebrating New Year's Eve and discharging firearms. Among the boys he recognized Nasrullah Zehri, Amir Zehri and Irfan Zehri, while he could identify several others. According to Sajjad Ali Pathan, he discovered Dahar lying

25 Case Diary - 25 (64-1). Case Crime No. 01/2014, Offence U/s. 302 PPC., 6/7 ATA. Diary No. 3.

26 Examination Report dated 17 January 2014. Forensic Division Larkana. Signed by Moazam Ali, Expert Firearms.

27 Case Diary - 25 (64-1). Case Crime No. 01/2014, Offence U/s. 302 PPC., 6/7 ATA. Diary No. 1-10.

28 A Safer World for the Truth (2021) Breaking the Silence: An Investigation into the Murder of Zubair Mujahid. https://www.saferworldforthertruth.com/assets/ASWFTT_report02_7june2021.pdf.

29 Dawn (2 February 2014). Journalist's killer yet to be named by police.

30 Interview Zulfiqar Kalhoro, September 2024.

injured in an alley, after which he drove him to the hospital for urgent medical care. As discussed in detail below, Sajid told our investigative team that he was in fact not present at the crime scene, and said that he testified before the court because there "was pressure from the police to tell the story the way they wanted it to be told". "We were scared, the family was scared", said Sajid Pathan.³¹

- Majid Ali Pathan, brother of Sajjad Ali Pathan. Majid made the exact same statement as Sajid Pathan, but without naming any of the accused.

Following the recording of these statements, on 7 February 2014, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Sajjad Ali Khokhar filed an application with the Anti-Terrorism Court in Larkana seeking the return of FIR 01/2014.³² The application asserted that the statements provided by the witnesses did not indicate any acts of terrorism or target killing, and thus did not constitute an offense under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, meaning that the Anti-Terrorism Court would have no jurisdiction. On the same day, the court granted the application, directing that FIR 01/2014 be returned and transferred to the appropriate ordinary criminal court with jurisdiction.

Our legal expert in Pakistan noted that Pakistani investigative authorities sometimes place certain charges to deliberately weaken the prosecution.³³ He notes that it appears that the police, rather than conducting a fair and impartial investigation, deliberately frame or alter charges in the charge sheet, which generally favours the accused. This practice is particularly significant in criminal cases where the standard of proof is "beyond reasonable doubt", as it creates artificial doubt in the prosecution's case - either through manipulation of charges or by failing to adhere to the requirements of the law. In the expert's opinion, placing charges to weaken the prosecution is often adopted specifically to favor the accused.

B. Official Investigation substitutes murder charges for charges related to 'accidental shooting'

Police only disclosed the arrest of Nasrullah Tunio to the court on 13 February 2014, registering FIR No. 10 of 2014 against Tunio. This FIR was registered under Section 24 of the Sindh Arms Act 2013. It is important to note that this was a different FIR than the original FIR No. 1 of 2014 regarding Dahar's murder, and that it therefore constitutes two separate cases. The remand order under section 167 Cr.P.C. suddenly recorded that FIR No. 10 of 2014 was registered under Sections 319, 337-H(ii), 148, and 149 PPC³⁴, without any reference to the earlier registration of Section 24 of the Sindh Arms Act.³⁵

FIR 10/2014 notes that SIP Syed Abdul Hakeem Shah of Badah station arrested accused Nasrullah Tunio and recovered an unlicensed 30 bore (7.62 mm) TT pistol along with a magazine containing 4 live bullets, on 13 February 2014, nine days after police had already told the media about the arrest.³⁶ The pistol taken from Nasrullah Tunio was compared with the bullet lodged from Dahar's body on 18 February 2014, but the examination reveals that the bullet in question was not fired from that specific pistol.³⁷

31 Interview Sajid Ali Pathan September 2024.

32 Anti-Terrorism Court Order 7 February 2014 in response to application from ASP Sajjad Ali Khokhar of Hyderi, Larkana.

33 Interview with Legal Expert Aman Aftab.

34 These sections refer to battery, manslaughter, rioting with deadly weapon and unlawful assembly, respectively.

35 First Information Report 10/2014, P.S. Badah.

36 First Information Report 10/2014, P.S. Badah.

37 Examination Report dated 18 February 2014. Forensic Division Larkana. Signed by Mehar Ali, Expert Firearms.

The complainant, Riaz Hussain, at this point dissatisfied with the investigation, addressed a formal letter, dated 24 February 2014, to the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police Office of Larkana Division.³⁸ It was asserted that the investigating officer (IO) had failed to comply with the rule of law by not submitting his final report (challan) within the mandated 17-day period (14-day period and 3 days grace period). It was further alleged that the IO, "in collusion with the accused, had purposefully conducted an inadequate investigation". On the same day, another formal letter was dispatched to the DIG Police Larkana, urging the re-investigation of FIR 1/2014.

One day later, on 25 February 2014, the eventual charge sheet (challan) was submitted. Officially, authorities have 14 days to submit the charge sheet after the filing of the FIR. In this case, it took them almost two months.

In the charge sheet, the offence of murder appears to have been replaced with other offences, specifically the aforementioned offences under Sections 319, 337-H(ii), 148, and 149 PPC.³⁹ Particularly interesting is that even prior to the submission of the charge sheet, the contents of FIR No. 10 of 2014 (submitted on 13 February 2014) already reflected the changes in the nature of the offence. In Pakistani law, the charge sheet constitutes the final report submitted by the investigative agency; the court determines, on the basis of this report, what offences are made and under what provisions the charges are to be framed.⁴⁰ Yet, the charge sheet conspicuously makes no explanation as to the reasons for the deletion of the murder charge. Our legal expert Aman Aftab notes that officially, the first time the murder charge was substituted with other charges (i.e. Section 319 PPC), was in the charge sheet.⁴¹

The charge sheet identifies the accused persons as Zulfiqar Ali, Piyar Ali, and Faheem.⁴² The charge sheet identifies the absconders as the brothers Aamir and Irfan Brohi (Zehri - Brohi is a sub-tribe of Zehri so they are used interchangeably), while the sheet identifies Nasrullah Tunio as on bail.⁴³ The same sheet lists the following pieces of evidence in police custody:

1. Blood stained clothes of deceased (except for the coat), duly sealed up;
2. Blood stained earth duly collected from the place of offence duly sealed up;
3. Bottle duly received from the Medico Legal Office duly sealed up;
4. One 30 bore (7.62 mm) pistol in working condition, without number, left side cover of handle of pistol is missing. Includes a magazine loaded with four live bullets, duly recovered from the accused Nasrullah Tunio.⁴⁴

The sheet lists 16 witnesses, of which only two witnesses are at that point alleged to have been at the scene of the crime. The rest of the witnesses are police officers, medical personnel and the complainant.⁴⁵

³⁸ Request for proper investigation in connection with Matter bearing Crime No: 01/2014 PS Baday, Offence, Under Section 302 PPC 6/7 ATA, 24 February 2014.

³⁹ These sections refer to battery, manslaughter, rioting with deadly weapon and unlawful assembly, respectively.

⁴⁰ Interview with Legal Expert Aman Aftab.

⁴¹ Interview with Legal Expert Aman Aftab.

⁴² Final Challan U/s. 170/173 Cr. P. C. PS. Badah, FIR No. 01/2014. Charge Sheet. No. 06/21-2014.

⁴³ Final Challan U/s. 170/173 Cr. P. C. PS. Badah, FIR No. 01/2014. Charge Sheet. No. 06/21-2014.

⁴⁴ Final Challan U/s. 170/173 Cr. P. C. PS. Badah, FIR No. 01/2014. Charge Sheet. No. 06/21-2014.

⁴⁵ Final Challan U/s. 170/173 Cr. P. C. PS. Badah, FIR No. 01/2014. Charge Sheet. No. 06/21-2014.

On 2 April 2014, Bushra Syed of Madadgaar Helpline, a helpline in Pakistan for women and children survivors of violence and abuse, sent a letter to the Inspector General of Police in Sindh, requesting the IG take action and reinvestigate the matter.⁴⁶ In it, Bushra Syed reiterates that Dahar had been receiving threats before he was murdered. The victim's sister Fauzia Hussain further alleged that the family had named the accused in the FIR but claimed that the police had deliberately altered the contents of the FIR and conducted an improper investigation under Section 319 PPC, relating to death by accidental firing.⁴⁷

On 7 and 16 April 2014, Fauzia Hussain sent two letters to the Police, the first to the IG and the second to the Deputy IG concerned. Fauzia requested a thorough reinvestigation by a Superintendent-level officer, mainly because the witness statements recorded under Section 161 and Section 164 CrPC (from Sajid and Majid Pathan) were not recorded properly, and because threats to Dahar's life were not investigated. Fauzia Hussain notes in her letters that Dahar recorded threats with the SHO of Badah Police station but that the "proof of that has been removed".⁴⁸ Despite Fauzia's repeated investigation requests the case went dormant. According to a legal expert who we consulted as part of our investigation, police often lose interest in cases in direct relation to the family's ability to keep public media pressure on the case.

Nearly two years later, on 16 March 2016, Owais Ali of Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) wrote a request for re-investigation to the Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Qaim Ali Shah.⁴⁹ The letter summarizes the case and reiterates that Dahar was targeted because of his stories on illicit sale of medicine donated by NGOs to local hospitals. Allegedly, Dahar had been covering this story at City Block health care center and the adjacent pharmacy when he was shot. Dahar had apparently registered a complaint with SHO Badah station, Shah Jahan Jhakrani, about threats he had been receiving. "After Shan's murder, the book containing his complaints mysteriously disappeared", the letter reads, echoing earlier complaints by Fauzia.⁵⁰

It was not until 19 May 2017, and again after repeated and consistent requests by Dahar's family, that the Inspector General of Police, based in Sindh, ordered the establishment of a Joint Investigation Team (JIT)⁵¹ to be supervised by the Senior Superintendent (SSP) of Dadu Police, Shabir Ahmed Sethar.⁵² The JIT report, published on 21 July 2017, first summarizes the investigative steps conducted up until then, before detailing the JIT's own investigative steps. These steps include "minutely perusing the case papers", "visiting the crime scene in presence of the complainant party", "openly and secretly enquiring from notable persons of locality", and "examining independent witnesses Zulifqar Ali and Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro".⁵³ Shabir Ahmed Sethar concludes that the investigation conducted so far by the IO under the supervision of ASP Sajjid Hussain Khokhar of Hyderi Larkana is "based on real facts".⁵⁴ He further notes that Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro had no enmity with Shan Dahar, and that a comparison of the Call Data Records (CDR) of Dr. Kandhro and those accused of the crime did not establish premeditated murder or any connection between Dr. Kandhro and the accused. Sethar does note that local police failed to recover bullet casings from the crime

46 Madadgaar helpline letter, 2 April 2014.

47 Madadgaar helpline letter, 2 April 2014.

48 Requests for reinvestigation Fauzia Hussain, 7 & 16 April 2014.

49 Request for re-inquiry, Pakistan Press Foundation, 16 March 2016.

50 Request for re-inquiry, Pakistan Press Foundation, 16 March 2016.

51 Order No. 19163-68/AIGP/OPS/III/2017 dated 19 May 2017.

52 Joint Investigation Team report, 21 July 2017.

53 Joint Investigation Team report, 21 July 2017.

54 Joint Investigation Team report, 21 July 2017.

scene, and, critically, that CDR data of accused Nasrullah Tunio, Amir Zehri and Irfan Zehri was in fact not obtained.⁵⁵ This would have made it impossible to establish a connection between the accused and Dr. Kandhro in the first place.

The last time any legal action was taken in the case was on 20 March 2018, when Gul Zamir Solangi, the Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Larkana, acquitted Nasrullah Tunio for his involvement in the murder of Dahar.⁵⁶ The defense for the accused stated that the accused, Nasrullah, was not named by the family in the original FIR, that there were no eyewitnesses to the event, that Dahar did not implicate the accused but instead implicated the Zehri community, that Prosecution Witness Sajid Pathan did not implicate the accused, and, crucially, that the bullet recovered from Dahar's body did not match the pistol recovered from the accused's possession.⁵⁷ In response, ASJ Zamir Solangi noted that it 'cannot be ignored that the name of the accused does not appear in the FIR but was placed in the challan two days later'. Furthermore, ASJ Solangi agrees that there were no eyewitnesses to the event, and that the weapon found in the possession of the accused did indeed not fire the bullet lodged from Dahar's body. Based on this, ASJ Solangi acquits Nasrullah Tunio, but keeps the case against 'Amir Ali Brohi (Zehri) and Irfan Ali Brohi (Zehri) on file until they are arrested and presented in court'.⁵⁸ This is a common strategy in Pakistan according to an advocate interviewed for this report. According to Fauzia and Riaz, both Irfan and Amri are still roaming freely in the city, defying their status as absconders.⁵⁹

"Both Irfan and Amri are still roaming freely in the city, defying their status as absconders."

Over the entire course of the investigation, we identified at least the officers below as having been involved in the police investigation:

- Abdul Hakeem Shah - Investigating Officer (IO) Badah Police Station
- Shahjehan Jakharani - Station House Officer Badah Police Station
- Ghulam Murtaza Abbasi/ Kalhoro - IO Anti-Terrorism Court cell Larkana (Special investigation team)
- Sajid Hussain Khokhar - Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Larkana - Head of special investigation team formed immediately after the murder
- Shabir Ahmed Sethar - Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Dadu - headed the 2017 JIT
- Khadim Rind - Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Larkana

55 Joint Investigation Team report, 21 July 2017.

56 Ruling of Additional Sessions Judge Larkana, 20 March 2018.

57 Ruling of Additional Sessions Judge Larkana, 20 March 2018.

58 Ruling of Additional Sessions Judge Larkana, 20 March 2018

59 Interview Fauzia Hussain and Riaz Hussain, June 2024.

Conclusion

The official story as presented by the authorities does not explain what Shan Dahar was doing at the pharmacy and the health facility in the middle of the night on New Year's Eve, nor does it explain why several doctors were later suspended for medical negligence.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the official investigation never analysed Dahar's work as a possible motive for his murder, never investigated threats that Dahar received, and never analysed critical evidence that could have shed light on his murder. After an incomplete investigation, the authorities replaced the murder charge for other charges on the charge sheet without proper explanation. This means that it is unclear why and when exactly authorities concluded that Dahar's death was caused by accidental injury from aerial firing, and not murder. In the next chapters we reconstruct the murder based on our own investigation, and dissect the many flaws in the official investigation which ensured that doubts persisted regarding the truth about the death of Dahar.

⁶⁰ Order of the Office of the Medical Superintendent CMC Hospital Larkana, January 2014; Interview with Fauzia Hussain and Riaz Hussain, June 2024; Pakistan Press Foundation, 13 May 2014. "Shan Dahar case: Chief Secretary suspends two senior medical officers". <https://www.pakistanpressfoundation.org/shan-dahar-case-chief-secretary-suspends-two-senior-medical-officers/>.

4

Free Press Unlimited's Investigation

Free Press Unlimited collaborated with several Pakistani investigative journalists and legal, medical, and forensic experts to uncover new information about the circumstances in which the murder was committed. Our investigation is based on dozens of court documents, police records, witness testimonies with friends, family, colleagues, police officers that worked on the case, and former suspects. We were also able to recover critical pieces of evidence such as Dahar's laptop, camcorder, phone and the coat he was wearing when he was shot, all of which were never analysed and never made it into the official records.

By recovering the data from Dahar's digital devices⁶¹ we were able to retrace Dahar's movements on the night of his murder in detail. The reconstruction below of the moments before his murder is based on recovered video and photographic evidence from his own digital devices, supplemented with witness interviews and conversations with investigative authorities.

A. Reconstruction of the murder based on our investigation

According to the authorities, Shan Dahar was at Noor pharmacy on the night of the murder,⁶² which is located in front of a local health clinic, referred to as 'City Block', in the centre of Badah town.⁶³ The video footage recovered by FPU, shot by Shan Dahar himself, shows that Dahar was indeed present at this location at that time.⁶⁴ He was filming both the inside of the City Block and the streets in front of Noor pharmacy. While filming the inside of the City Block, a woman in labour can be seen and heard. Several women doctors or nurses and a male security guard try to prevent Dahar from filming further into the facility, but Dahar manages to film several details inside the facility, such as the personnel register (where staff sign in and out of their shifts), a cabinet filled with medicine, and a list of medicines and their expiration date. One of the staff members, a female doctor, is seen calling someone on the phone while angrily telling Dahar to stop filming. The security guard, identified as Munna Qadir Kandhro, gestures that Dahar should get out.

When Dahar goes outside the building into the courtyard facing the street, it is pitch black outside, and loud bangs are heard ringing through the night, which various sources told our team were gunshots and fireworks that are a common tradition and part of Pakistan's New Year's celebrations. Dahar films the security guard once again, before focussing on several ambulances. The ambulances seem to have been donated to the City Block by an organisation called Integrated Health System Strengthening Alliance (IHSAS), with support from the Government of Norway and the Government of Sindh. We discuss this donation and the possible role it played in the case of Dahar below.

61 Which at an unidentified point in the last decade were wiped completely clean,

62 On the night of 31 December 2014, New Years Eve, at around 11:30 am,

63 First Information Report FIR No. 01/2014 u/s 302 PPC, 6/7 Anti-Terrorism Act PS Badeh, District Larkana.

64 To corroborate whether the footage was taken on the night of the murder we first found that the footage is at least from December 2013, because that date is above a personnel registration book recorded inside City Block. Additionally, metadata of the footage points to the footage being taken in 2013 as well. On footage from the same night, Dahar is seen talking to his friends and wearing the coat he was wearing when he was shot. Gunshots and fireworks can be heard, signalling New Year's Eve. Together with the witness testimonies on record, we can assume the footage was taken on the night of the incident.

Dahar also films in front of City Block at Noor pharmacy and records its owner, later identified as Zulfiqar Kalhoro (also sometimes referred to as Zulfiqar Bhatti), while he purchases medicine from him. In our interview with Zulfiqar, he said that Dahar was at the City Block trying to help a patient in pain.⁶⁵ From the footage in our possession, Dahar is seen purchasing six types of medicine. One of the medicines seen, Syntocin, is used to induce labour.⁶⁶ Another, Nootropil (Piracetam), is often used in cases of fetal distress, despite there not being enough scientific evidence to prove its effectiveness.⁶⁷ This corroborates part of Karlhoro's story.



Screengrab of video footage where Dahar is seen purchasing medicine. The keys and hand belong to the pharmacy owner Zulfiqar Kalhoro, who opened the shop for Dahar. Source: File retrieved from Dahar's digital devices.

The doctor in charge at Badah health center, and thus the City Block, at the time, Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro, stated that he received a call from Dahar about a patient not receiving the medical care she required from the City Block.⁶⁸ Pharmacy owner Kalhoro distinctly remembers receiving a call from Dahar as well at 11:50 PM⁶⁹ in which Dahar asked him for medicine for the patient. Kalhoro normally closes his shop at 7 PM, but stated that he "came to the shop, gave him [Dahar] the medicines and left." At around 12:25 AM, Shan calls him again, asking him to come back as he needs more medicines.⁷⁰ After receiving the medicine, Dahar zooms in on the calculator used to show him the costs of the medicine. You can see the medicine Dahar is purchasing on the counter, and the key used by Kalhoro to unlock the pharmacy so late at night.

Zulfiqar Bhatti told our team that Dahar was leaning with his right elbow on the pharmacy counter, with his back to the small street. He was facing the main street with the City Block on his left side.⁷¹ Kalhoro stated that he suddenly saw Dahar drop to the ground, and that he rushed to him and tried to lift him up with the help of city block watchman Munna Qadir Kandhro, an eyewitness to the incident who is also visible on some of the video footage.

⁶⁵ Interview Zulfiqar Bhatti, September 2024.

⁶⁶ NPS Medicine. <https://www.nps.org.au/medicine-finder/syntocinon-solution-for-injection>.

⁶⁷ Hofmeyr, J. G. & Kulier, R. (June 2012). Piracetam for Fetal Distress in Labour. Cochrane Pregnancy and Childbirth Group. Accessible via <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7048034/>.

⁶⁸ Interview Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro, September 2024.

⁶⁹ Interview Zulfiqar Kalhoro, September 2024.

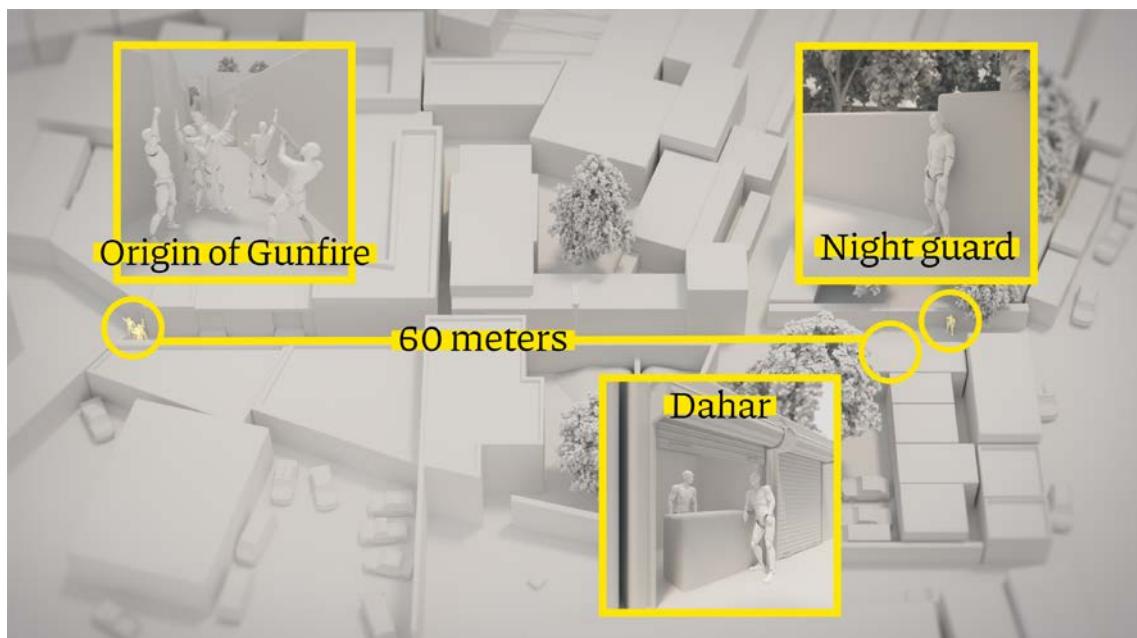
⁷⁰ Interview Zulfiqar Kalhoro, September 2024.

⁷¹ Interview pharmacy owner Zulfiqar Kalhoro, September 2024

In one of those videos, the watchman is seen trying to urge Dahar out of the City Block. When they manage to lift Dahar up a little, they see blood on the ground where he had been lying.⁷² They carried Dahar over to the City Block health facility, where Zulfiqar says they immediately called Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro.⁷³

Our team interviewed former Investigative Officer (IO) Murtaza Kalhoro, who investigated the case from the beginning. He stated that the bullet that hit Dahar was fired from approximately 50 to 60 meters away.⁷⁴ And according to the post mortem report, the charge sheet and the forensic analysis of the bullet, the bullet that hit Dahar was a 9.62 mm bullet fired from a TT Pistol that had ricocheted off a wall above Dahar and hit him on the left side of his back, lacerating his spleen. IO Kalhoro also noted that the bullet's trajectory was altered because it had hit a wall above Dahar, adding that the speed of the bullet was significantly slowed down before it hit him.⁷⁵

Based on the footage in our possession, a visit to the crime scene, the witness testimonies from IO Murtaza Kalhoro and pharmacy owner Zulfiqar Kalhoro, the post mortem report, and the forensic analysis of the bullet, we recreated the crime scene.



According to police investigators, this map illustrates the distance between the origin of the gunfire and the position of Shan Dahar, who was facing the main street, while leaning on his right elbow.
Designed by Shapes&Shaders.

72 Interview pharmacy Zulfiqar Kalhoro, September 2024.

73 Interview pharmacy Zulfiqar Kalhoro, September 2024.

74 Interview IO Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.

75 Interview IO Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.



A view from the point where Dahar was standing (with his back) towards the origin of the gun fire. According to the authorities first estimate, the bullet came from beyond the electricity pole seen in the distance, around 50 to 60 meters away.

Source: own archive.



This photo was taken from the position of the origin of the gunfire, according to police, towards the point where Shan Dahar was standing in the distance, near the white car.

Source: own archive.



Zulfiqar Kalhoro in his pharmacy. Dahar was supposedly standing on the right side of the shop, below the cover of the metal gate, with his right side towards the wall, leaning with his right elbow on the counter, and with his left side to the city block (opposite from the pharmacy).

Source: own archive.

Taking all the available pieces of evidence from the authorities into account, our investigators conclude that it is highly unlikely that the authorities' version of Dahar's death is correct. Dahar was facing the main street, leaning on the counter with his right elbow in the shop window of the pharmacy.⁷⁶ The left side of his back, where the bullet entered, was facing more towards the entrance of the City Block. The authorities state that the bullet ricocheted directly above Dahar, before hitting him on the left side. In order to do so, a single pistol bullet fired from approximately 60 meters away would have had to miss the electricity pole between the origin of the gunfire and the position of Dahar, ricochet off the wall directly above him, miss two iron shutters, and hit him on the left side, which was facing away from the wall from where the bullet came. From our investigation we can therefore conclude that the official version of events is highly improbable.

"It is highly unlikely that the authorities' version of Dahar's death is correct."

B. Medical negligence leads to Dahar's death

Dr. Kandhro told our team that he remembers receiving a call from the staff at the City Block at around 12:30 AM⁷⁷, informing him that Shan had been shot and had been brought there. Kandhro told our investigators: "I rushed to the City Block and within 15 minutes, administered first aid and dispatched him to the Chandka Medical College Hospital (CMCH) in Larkana, about an hour away. I couldn't treat him at the City Block. I did what I could, which was to apply pressure to the wound and dispatch him to the hospital for treatment."⁷⁸ According to Dr. Kandhro, the ambulance posted at the City Block then transported Shan to CMCH Larkana. "There were two or three other men with him at the time, including [pharmacy owner] Zulfiqar Bhatti," said Dr. Kandhro.⁷⁹

Sajid Ali Pathan, Dahar's cousin, was at home in Badah when he received a call from an unknown number, informing him that Dahar had been shot.⁸⁰ "I didn't recognise the first man who spoke to me, but I recognised the second man", Sajid said. He was told to rush to the City Block as soon as possible. Sajid, along with his brother Majid Pathan, started running towards the City Block. A few yards before the street where the city block is located, Sajid told our team that he came upon a stationary ambulance in front of the National Bank of Pakistan on the main street of Badah. "The driver was visibly drunk and another driver had to be called in," said Sajid. Present in the ambulance were an injured Shan and another journalist, whom he identified as Iqbal Channa.⁸¹ In the ambulance, Shan was barely conscious. "He was unable to talk and was constantly coughing", Sajid recalled.⁸²

⁷⁶ Interview pharmacy owner Zulfiqar Bhatti, September 2024.

⁷⁷ Interview Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro, September 2024.

⁷⁸ Interview Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro, September 2024.

⁷⁹ Interview Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro, September 2024.

⁸⁰ Interview Sajid Ali Pathan, September 2024.

⁸¹ Interview Sajid Ali Pathan, September 2024.

⁸² Interview Sajid Ali Pathan, September 2024.

At 02:00 AM, Dahar was finally admitted to CMCH Larkana.⁸³ According to the death certificate, Dahar had been attended to by the night-CMO Dr. Sajjad Jalbani, Dr. Safdar Abbasi, surgical unit-II P.G. Dr. Vikrami Dr. Ali Gohar Chandio, Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Gaad, Dr. Walheed Jalbani (M-Unit-II), and Dr. Ayaz Shahani of the Cardiology department.⁸⁴ But Sajid said that "the big doctors, who were supposed to be on duty, were not present."⁸⁵ Childhood friend Ghulam Ali, too, raised doubts about the doctors' conduct, saying that the doctors on duty were intoxicated as it was New Year's eve.⁸⁶ The attendants gave Dahar blood transfusions to mitigate the loss of blood, but did little else, said Sajid Pathan. Waqar Samo, who was also present at the hospital for several hours, recalled that the doctors kept assuring them that Dahar was not in danger, and that they were waiting for his blood pressure to stabilize before operating on him to extract the bullet, which was lodged in the body.⁸⁷ In fact, Dahar was left unattended in CMCH Larkana for more than seven hours, after which he succumbed to his injuries at 09:30 AM.⁸⁸ Investigating Officer Kalhoro emphasized to our team that if Dahar had received the proper treatment, and his blood system had been 'fixed', he would not have died.⁸⁹

Our team spoke with Dr. Summaiya Syed, Chief Police Surgeon (medico-legal officer) for Karachi, and requested her expert opinion on the postmortem report and additional observations about the death of Shan Dahar. Dr. Syed drew one summary conclusion from the documents we shared with her: "The bullet didn't kill him. Medical negligence did."⁹⁰

Four months after Dahar's death, in May 2014, Sindh Chief Secretary Sajjad Saleem Hotiana placed two senior medical officers under suspension: Dr. Abdul Ghafar Kandhro, who was in charge of Badah rural health center, and Dr. Ali Gohar Chandio, Senior Medical Officer of Chandka Medical College Hospital in Larkana. The two were found guilty of negligence⁹¹, but despite that, were not investigated further by the authorities.

⁸³ Death Certificate Zakir Hussain alias Shan S/O Mohammad Ibrahim Dahar, 1 January 2014.

⁸⁴ Death Certificate Zakir Hussain alias Shan S/O Mohammad Ibrahim Dahar, 1 January 2014.

⁸⁵ Interview Sajid Ali Pathan, September 2024.

⁸⁶ Interview Ghulam Ali, September 2024.

⁸⁷ Interview Waqar Samo, September 2024.

⁸⁸ IFEX (20 June 2016). Shan Dahar: A family's fight for justice. <https://ifex.org/shan-dahar-a-familys-fight-for-justice/>; Interview with Fauzia Hussain and Riaz Hussain, June 2024; Pakistan Press Foundation, 13 May 2014. "Shan Dahar case: Chief Secretary suspends two senior medical officers". <https://www.pakistanpressfoundation.org/shan-dahar-case-chief-secretary-suspends-two-senior-medical-officers/>.

⁸⁹ Interview IO Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.

⁹⁰ Expert Opinion Interview, Dr. Summaiya Syed, Chief Police Surgeon Karachi, July 2025.

⁹¹ Pakistan Press Foundation, 13 May 2014. "Shan Dahar case: Chief Secretary suspends two senior medical officers". <https://www.pakistanpressfoundation.org/shan-dahar-case-chief-secretary-suspends-two-senior-medical-officers/>.

5

Flaws in the investigation point to negligence

Based on our investigation, we have found multiple flaws in the official story presented by Pakistani investigative authorities. Our investigation shows that significant mistakes were made throughout the investigative process. These flaws are the result of limited investigative capacity on the part of the authorities, and a lack of political will to solve the crime in the first place. In summary, police investigators were negligent during evidence collection and handling, which led to omissions and incomplete evidence; did not follow proper procedures and laws regarding handling of suspects and witnesses; and failed to pursue leads that Dahar could have been targeted for his work. Together, the flaws indicate serious negligence in the case of Shan Dahar, to such a degree that it raises serious doubts about which elements of the investigations are reliable and which are not.

A. Police were negligent during evidence collection and handling, which led to omissions and incomplete evidence

Throughout the investigation, the investigative authorities violated the chain of custody and treated evidence with neglect. Investigative authorities did not investigate Dahar's digital devices to ascertain potential motives, did not forensically analyse the coat that Dahar was wearing the night he was shot, did not recover empty bullet casings from the crime scene, did not duly handle evidence, and did not manage to interview Dahar during the nine hours he was alive after the incident, and despite being alerted to the incident. Finally, expert analysis of the postmortem report shows that Dahar died of medical negligence, not of the injury itself.

First, there is no evidence in the police case diaries that they subjected Shan Dahar's digital devices (laptop, camcorder and phone) to forensic analysis despite the fact that Dahar had the devices on him when he was shot. According to Fauzia, and confirmed by a forensic analyst approached for this investigation, all documents were deleted/wiped from the laptop.⁹² In the conversation with Fauzia, she noted that Dahar's laptop had all the information on it that proved he was working on a story concerning embezzlement of funds from donated medicines. IO Murtaza Kalhoro admitted to our investigators that he and his staff never looked at Dahar's laptop, and also never analysed Dahar's camcorder.⁹³

Second, the coat that Shan Dahar was wearing when he was shot was never analysed by a forensic expert.⁹⁴ According to the postmortem report, Dahar was wearing the coat when he was shot.⁹⁵ An analysis of the bullet hole in the jacket could have provided clues about the distance of the shooter, and the angle of the bullet. However, when our investigative team asked Investigative Officer Murtaza Kalhoro about the coat, he stated that he knew about the coat, but that the family did not surrender the coat to him⁹⁶, something the family denies. Fauzia and Riaz had shown that coat to the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) as well, but the coat was not taken into the chain of evidence by police, according to Fauzia. Fauzia notes that the coat is still in her possession.⁹⁷

⁹² Interview Fauzia Hussain and Riaz Hussain, June 2024.

⁹³ Interview Investigating Officer Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.

⁹⁴ Interview Fauzia Hussain and Riaz Hussain, June 2024.

⁹⁵ Post Mortem, submitted on 7 January 2014.

⁹⁶ Interview Investigating Officer Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.

⁹⁷ Interview Fauzia Hussain and Riaz Hussain, June 2024.

Third, when a patient with a bullet wound is brought to the hospital, the police normally start their investigation immediately. In Dahar's case, when he was brought to the hospital from Badah, three police officers came and inquired about his name as he was being rushed to the emergency ward on a stretcher.⁹⁸ They then left and no one else came after that. Critically, Dahar, who awoke for several brief moments during these tedious hours, allegedly told those around him that he had seen "the Zehri's" when he was shot. Police were not present to record this however, and IO Murtaza Kalhoro stated to our team that police investigators were not aware that Dahar had mentioned names in the first place.⁹⁹ A day after the murder though, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Khokhar told Dawn that "the murderer would soon be arrested as the journalist had disclosed the name of his enemy to his close friends before his death". He said the suspected killer, in the words of the late journalist, "belonged to the Zehri Brohi clan".¹⁰⁰

Fourth, there have been several inconsistencies in the official story regarding pistols and bullets used in the attack, and how clues related to those were analysed. For example, Dawn noted that police first claimed the bullet was fired from 20 feet, then changed that to 40ft and then finally to 250ft.¹⁰¹ Additionally, the charge sheet notes that a sketch of the crime scene was ordered, but we were unable to locate this sketch from any of the many files we recovered. Furthermore, according to IO Kalhoro, police analyzed the whole street and found a bullet hole above where Dahar was standing, evidence of which is also missing from the files. Lastly, police also failed to recover empty bullet casings from the crime scene.¹⁰² This might have been the result of various other mistakes, namely that the police arrived very late to the crime scene and that, according to Ghulam Ali, the police did not preserve and cordone off the crime scene.¹⁰³ Because of the fact that police investigators were unable to recover any empties from the scene¹⁰⁴, it is unclear whether police did in fact conduct a full crime scene analysis. Taken all together, these points indicate negligence regarding the analysis of the crime scene, and that investigative standards and protocols were not followed adequately.

Fifth, our investigators shared the postmortem report and additional police files with Karachi Police Surgeon (the top medico-legal officer of Karachi) Dr. Summaiya Syed, and interviewed her on her observations about Shan Dahar's case. Dr. Syed drew one summary conclusion from what we shared with her: "The bullet didn't kill him. Medical negligence did."¹⁰⁵

**"The bullet didn't
kill him. Medical
negligence did."**

98 Interview Sajid Ali Pathan, September 2024.

99 Interview IO Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.

100 Dawn (2 January 2014). Senior journalist shot dead in Larkana. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1077860/senior-journalist-shot-dead-in-larkana>.

101 Dawn (3 May 2021). A New Year's Night Murder. Available via <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/a-new-years-night-murder/>.

102 Joint Investigation Team report, 21 July 2017.

103 Interview Ghulam Ali, September 2024.

104 Joint Investigation Team report, 21 July 2017.

105 Expert Opinion Interview, Dr. Summaiya Syed, Chief Police Surgeon Karachi, July 2025.

According to Dr. Summaiya Syed, the postmortem report itself carries more questions than answers. It lacks important details that could have helped answer some of the burning questions regarding the injury that ultimately cost Dahar his life. For instance, said Dr. Syed, the postmortem says nothing about:

- The size of the injury where the bullet entered
- Whether there was any blackening (gunpowder residue) at the site of entry
- Where the bullet was found in the body (There is no exit wound and according to the forensic analysis conducted later, a .30 bore bullet was provided by the medico-legal officer, which one can only assume was extracted during the postmortem although the report doesn't mention it at all)
- How much blood had leaked into the body's cavities due to the internal bleeding (this would give an idea of how bad the organs had been penetrated and whether this was indeed the cause of death)
- There is no pictorial record of the postmortem in the available files. This could have helped answer some of the questions such as the blackening around the wound and its detailed size
- The Medico-Legal Officer did not include observations about certain clothes Dahar was wearing on the night he was killed, specifically Dahar's jacket

According to Dr. Syed, the observations in the postmortem report are insufficient to draw conclusions on the distance from which the bullet was fired or its direction. Furthermore, she added that regarding the observation that the spleen was lacerated something is not right, because in that case, the victim would not have been able to survive nine hours like Dahar did. She did say, however, that it could be possible that he slowly bled to death: the postmortem report mentions nothing about the intensity of the injury to the spleen and it is therefore impossible to tell.

Dr. Syed told our investigators that a forensic analysis of the jacket Dahar was wearing that night (which has since been in the family's possession and never examined by the MLO or other specialists) may provide some clues as to the distance from which the bullet was fired.

Finally, police investigators did not properly seal potentially critical evidence. In one case, investigators even sealed blood-stained soil in an empty cigarette pack, a clear violation of investigative protocol.¹⁰⁶

The police's handling of evidence and its forensic analyses stand in stark contrast to the requirements under Rule 25.58 and Rule 25.41(2) of the Police Rules, 1934, which require the provision of an investigation bag containing proper tools for evidence collection, and prescribe specific procedures for packing, sealing and labeling exhibits to ensure they are preserved correctly and admissible in court. Internationally, standards such as the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016) similarly require that all material evidence, relevant to the cause, manner and circumstances of death, be properly recovered, preserved and documented. Although clear guidelines exist in Pakistan for murder investigations and handling forensic evidence, these guidelines were not implemented in the case of Shan Dahar, leading to critical evidence being lost or not duly analysed.

106 First Information Report 1:2014. January 2014.

B. Proper procedures and laws regarding handling of suspects and witnesses were not followed.

Throughout their investigation, police investigators failed to interview all relevant witnesses, coerced individuals into false testimonies, and arbitrarily arrested witnesses with the purpose of extorting them. As a result of these practices, at least one key witness was never interrogated, while at least two witnesses altered their statements before the magistrate.

First, one of the only eyewitnesses of Dahar's death, Munna Qadir Kandhro, the night security guard who was guarding the health facility where Dahar was shot, was never interrogated. According to Fauzia and according to pharmacy owner Zulfiqar Kalhoro, Kandhro was picked up by police, released on bail and subsequently disappeared from Badah.¹⁰⁷ Our team did all they could to locate Kandhro through family members remaining in Badah to verify this story, who only shared that Kandhro was living in Karachi and that he did not want to communicate with us.

The other critical witness to the incident, pharmacy owner Zulfiqar Kalhoro, was briefly arrested but police did not record an official statement from him. Kalhoro told our investigators that he was only released after paying a bribe and was subsequently never brought to the witness stand.¹⁰⁸

Additionally, police exerted pressure on at least two critical witnesses to alter their testimonies.¹⁰⁹ Sajid Pathan, one of the few witnesses who made a statement before the magistrate, told our investigators that he was in fact not present at the crime scene when Dahar was hit by the bullet.¹¹⁰ However, in his statement before the magistrate, recorded on 4 February 2014, Sajid said that at approximately 12:30 AM, while passing through Channa Muhalla street, he observed several intoxicated youths celebrating New Year's Eve and discharging firearms. When asked about the inconsistencies between what Sajid had told us and his testimony before the magistrate, Sajid said IO Murtaza Kalhoro had coerced him into giving the statement in this manner. Sajid Ali Pathan told our investigators: "There was pressure from the police. We were doing what we were told. We were scared for our families."¹¹¹

"There was pressure from the police. We were doing what we were told. We were scared for our families."

Largely based on these statements (from Sajid and a similar statement from his brother Majid), police filed an application with the Anti-Terrorism Court in Larkana seeking the return of FIR 01/2014. The application asserted that the statements provided by the witnesses did not

¹⁰⁷ Dawn (3 May 2021). A New Year's Night Murder. Available via <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/a-new-years-night-murder/>; Interview Zulfiqar Bhatti, September 2024.

¹⁰⁸ Interview Zulfiqar Bhatti, September 2024.

¹⁰⁹ Interview Sajid Ali Pathan, September 2024.

¹¹⁰ Interview Sajid Ali Pathan, September 2024.

¹¹¹ Interview Sajid Ali Pathan, September 2024.

indicate any acts of terrorism or target killing, and did not therefore constitute an offense under the ATA 1997. On the same day, the court granted the application, directing that FIR 01/2014 be returned and transferred to the appropriate ordinary criminal court with jurisdiction.

Finally, police announced to the media that they had arrested multiple suspects, including Nasrullah Tunio, on 4 February 2014.¹¹² Police only reported the arrest to the court on 13 February 2014, which means that they kept Tunio in their custody extrajudicially for at least nine days.¹¹³ A forensic comparison done in February 2014 between Tunio's pistol and the bullet lodged from Dahar's body showed no match, so the bullet was not fired from Tunio's pistol. Furthermore, not a single witness had seen Tunio near the scene of the crime. This is probably why Tunio was identified as being on bail on the final charge sheet of June 2014. Despite there being no evidence linking Tunio to the murder, he was only acquitted four years later in 2018, officially due to lack of evidence. This raises suspicions that the investigations into Tunio's involvement were not based on any tangible leads but rather served to suggest investigative progress.

C. Police investigators failed to pursue leads that provide indications that Dahar could have been targeted for his work

Police investigators failed to investigate any potential motive for Dahar's death, despite indications that Dahar was being threatened¹¹⁴ because of his work and despite the fact that Dahar was investigating compromising stories. The investigators had tunnel vision regarding the accidental aerial firing, despite finding not a single piece of evidence to support this claim. As a result, they removed the murder charge at an unspecified date and for an unknown reason, and substituted it with charges related to the incident being an accident. A key reason for this tunnel vision was the fact that investigators did not pursue any alternative theories, which should be standard in murder investigations. Specifically, they ignored indications that Dahar had been working on a story relating to counterfeit drugs and the illegal selling of donated medicine. Additionally, investigators ignored the actual reason for Dahar's death: medical negligence.

Multiple witnesses told our investigators that Dahar was covering a "medicine story" at the time of his murder. Fauzia and Riaz Hussain stated that Dahar was working on a story regarding corruption around the reselling of medicines, which according to them, were donated by an NGO to be shared with patients freely, but which were sold to pharmacies.¹¹⁵ According to them, Dahar had warned Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro, the manager of the City Block and one of the first responders when Dahar was shot, to refrain from selling medications. When our investigators asked Dr. Kandhro about this, he vehemently denied any allegation that there was any medicine-related corruption in his health center: "Let me tell you that as long as I was an M.S [at City Block], no one would dare take a pill from our hospital and take it to the hospital store. I still challenge it."¹¹⁶

¹¹² Dawn (4 February 2014). Journalist's killer yet to be named by police. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1084837/journalists-killer-yet-to-be-named-by-police>.

¹¹³ First Information Report 10/2014, P.S. Badah.

¹¹⁴ Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) Owais Alsam Ali (16 March 2016). Request for Re[in]quiry to the Chief Ministry of Sindh.

¹¹⁵ Interview Fauzia Hussain and Riaz Hussain, June 2024.

¹¹⁶ Interview Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Kandhro, September 2024.

Confirming Fauzia and Riaz' story, Nasir Baig Chugtai, director of Abb Takk News, where Dahar worked at the time, told CPJ by phone back in January 2014 that Dahar had covered a wide range of sensitive topics like drugs, politics and poverty. "I can confirm that he was working on a story about counterfeit drugs at the time," Chugtai said.¹¹⁷

Dahar's friend Zaib Ali Sario, told our team, before we had recovered Dahar's videographic footage, that the incident had started that night with Dahar complaining at the local health clinic about a patient not receiving the required medication.¹¹⁸ "Later when he [Dahar] went to the store owner, he told the store owner that 'you sell those medicines and you have an agreement with the doctors'. That recording exists. That has been recorded," said Sario. We were able to corroborate Sario's comments by uncovering Dahar's digital devices and recovering the footage Sario referred to, among others.

In the footage taken by Dahar on the night of the murder, Dahar is seen filming inside City Block healthcare facility, filming a cabinet filled with medicines, and a list of medicines with their expiration dates, in great detail. Dahar was also filming how he purchased medicines from the pharmacy opposite City Block. He even showed the price that he was supposed to pay for the medicines, and discussed the fact that he was purchasing medicines from the pharmacy with its owner, Zulfiqar Kalhoro.¹¹⁹ Kalhoro told our investigators that the medicines that Dahar took photos and videos of were from "Dr. Farid", a company that supplies medicines, he said.¹²⁰

When confronted about the investigators' negligence in pursuing alternative theories for the incident, IO Murtaza Kalhoro, who investigated the murder in its immediate aftermath, acknowledged that they did indeed fail to look at either Dahar's work or the medical negligence angle.¹²¹ Kalhoro further stated that he did not investigate any of the possible motives (specifically corruption with medicines) because "there was no proof, nor were there any allegations at that time".¹²² This is demonstrably false. Immediately after the murder, Fauzia and Riaz indicated that the medicine story could be a possible motive for this murder¹²³, and sent several requests for reinvestigations, emphasizing the need to look into Dahar's work, the role played by Dr. Kandhro of City Block health care facility, and the fact that Dahar was threatened because of his work.¹²⁴

**"There was no proof,
nor were there
any allegations at
that time". This is
demonstrably false.**

¹¹⁷ CPJ (9 January 2014). Shan Dahar's death underscores impunity in Pakistan. <https://cpj.org/2014/01/shan-dahars-death-underscores-impunity-in-pakistan/>

¹¹⁸ Interview Zaib Ali Sario, September 2024.

¹¹⁹ Interview Zulfiqar Kalhoro, September 2024. Archived footage by Shan Dahar, 31 December 2013.

¹²⁰ Interview Zulfiqar Kalhoro, September 2024.

¹²¹ Interview Investigating Officer Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.

¹²² Interview Investigating Officer Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.

¹²³ Interview Fauzia Hussain and Riaz Hussain, June 2024.

¹²⁴ Requests for reinvestigation, 24 February 2014 and 7 April 2014.

Interestingly, IO Kalhoro confirmed to our investigators that Dahar died due to medical negligence, and that he could have been saved had he received adequate care.¹²⁵ But despite conceding malpractice on the part of the doctors in the hospital, and the allegations of some of their involvement in the “medicine story” that Dahar was covering, the IO did not investigate their role further.¹²⁶ Neither Dr. Kandhro nor any of the doctors at CMCH were originally investigated by the authorities. Dr. Kandhro was only briefly questioned as part of a reinvestigation of the case in 2017, in which the investigator, SSP Shabbir Ahmed Sethar, noted that the doctor was not involved in the incident because there was no connection between the doctor and the five accused. Sethar based his conclusion solely on an analysis of Call Data Records (CDR) of the accused and of the doctor. Critically though, Sethar failed to recover the CDR of three of the five accused: Nasrullah Tunio, the suspect in custody, and Amir and Irfan Zehri, the two absconding brothers accused by the family of being involved.¹²⁷ That means that Sethar’s conclusion that Dr. Kandhro was not involved in the incident, relied solely on an incomplete and insufficient analysis of phone records.

In 2018, Dr. Ali Gohar Chandio, Senior Medical Officer at CMCH’s Larkana Surgery Department, and one of the doctors suspended for negligence after Dahar’s murder, had to show up in court after the Sindh High Court summoned him concerning unhygienic conditions in the Chandka Medical College hospital. The judges expressed dissatisfaction over the poor hygienic condition and the lack of supply of medicines for patients.¹²⁸

According to Ghulam Ali, a friend of Shan Dahar, the Station House Officer (SHO) of the police station next to the crime scene was transferred the day that Dahar was shot¹²⁹, while two others were appointed in quick succession by SSP Khalid Mustafa Korai.¹³⁰ Dawn recently reported that this tactic was also used in the 2021 murder case of journalist Ajay Lawani.¹³¹ Both Lawani and Dahar had had run-ins with their respective SHOs, and according to Dawn, Dahar had asked the SHO during a press conference shortly before the murder how he ‘could afford such a lavish lifestyle on a policeman’s salary’.¹³² According to Fauzia and Riaz Hussein, Dahar had also lodged a complaint about threats against him at the police station of this SHO on 25 December 2013, but our team was unable to verify this claim because the incident book had disappeared.

¹²⁵ Interview Investigating Officer Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.

¹²⁶ Interview Investigating Officer Murtaza Kalhoro, September 2024.

¹²⁷ Joint Investigation Team report, 21 July 2017.

¹²⁸ Dawn (21 June 2018). Judges pay surprise visit to Larkana hospitals, summon doctors to court. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1415145>.

¹²⁹ Interview Ghulam Ali, September 2024.

¹³⁰ Dawn (3 May 2021). A New Year’s Night Murder. Available via <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/a-new-years-night-murder/>.

¹³¹ Dawn (3 May 2021). A New Year’s Night Murder. Available via <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/a-new-years-night-murder/>.

¹³² Dawn (3 May 2021). A New Year’s Night Murder. Available via <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/a-new-years-night-murder/>.

6

Conclusion

Pakistani journalist Shan Dahar was murdered on the night of 1 January 2014. Nearly 12 years later, his killers remain free, and the chance of getting justice has shrunk significantly.

Investigative authorities first focused on investigating a murder charge, but removed the murder charge before they submitted the final charge sheet two months later. It remains unclear exactly why and when the authorities substituted the murder charge for charges related to accidental discharge. Authorities subsequently concluded that Dahar died as a result of an accident due to celebratory aerial gunfire during New Year's Eve. This conclusion was based on an incomplete investigation that did not adhere to proper investigation standards and procedures as set out in investigative guidelines both in Pakistan and internationally.

Police identified three potential perpetrators, one of whom was acquitted in 2018 due to lack of evidence, and two others have been absconding since the murder, despite reports that they are currently roaming freely in the city. Unless these absconders are arrested, the case will remain dormant. This is a common practice in Pakistan, where dormant cases await investigative action that will not materialize without increased public pressure.

Based on a thorough review of the official case files, witness testimonies and police records, interviews with individuals close to the case, an independent expert analysis of the postmortem report, and an analysis of Dahar's digital devices and clothing, this report has documented many flaws in the official investigation and inconsistencies in the official story told by the authorities. In summary, police investigators were negligent during evidence collection and handling, which led to omissions, and incomplete evidence; they did not follow proper procedures and laws regarding handling of suspects and witnesses; and they failed to pursue leads that Dahar could have been targeted for his work.

Taken together, the multiple flaws in the investigation indicate negligence on the part of the authorities. Dahar's case could have been solved if proper investigative protocols and procedures had been followed. To attain justice for the relatives of Dahar, and to ensure that Pakistani investigative authorities are scrutinized and not allowed to make the same mistakes in future cases, we recommend the following:

To the Superintendent and Investigation Officer of Sindh Police:

- Conduct an independent, transparent and impartial reinvestigation of the case that includes:
 - Prompt and decisive measures to locate and apprehend the absconding accused. These measures should include conducting targeted raids, maintaining surveillance, coordinating with other police units, obtaining directives from senior police authorities, e.g. the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) or Inspector General (IG), to reinvigorate the investigation, liaising with police units in other districts or provinces where relevant, entering the absconders' particulars into the national crime database, issuing alerts, and monitoring other cases in which the absconders may appear. Without the location, arrest and questioning of the absconders, Shan Dahar's case cannot be reopened;
 - Location and interrogation of security guard and eye witness Munna Qadir Kandho, currently residing in Karachi;
 - An independent forensic analysis on Dahar's coat to ascertain critical details about the distance of the bullet, and the angle at which the bullet entered his body;

To Pakistani political authorities:

- Collaborate with and support Safe Journalism, a civil society initiative that was founded specifically with the aim of countering impunity in cases like Shan Dahar. The Central Government has agreed, in principle, to collaborate with Safe Journalism to end impunity in murder cases. We urge the government to take the next step, and sign a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Joint Action Committee to jointly monitor investigations and prosecutions to ensure fairness.

To the Pakistan National Police:

- In collaboration with Safe Journalism, develop specialized investigative protocols for cases of murders of journalists. Such a protocol should, at least, include the following:
 - Initial investigations must be conducted by a specialized crime investigation unit or by an officer of Superintendent of Police (SP) rank or higher, to increase objectivity and transparency.
 - Guidelines for motive analysis in the work of a journalist.
 - Provide guarantees that a forensic team is dispatched in every case, regardless of location.
 - Ensure that crime scenes are properly preserved until forensic analysis is completed.
 - Provide accountability measures for officers who accidentally or intentionally contaminate evidence, and mishandle witnesses or suspects, and thereby undermine the investigation.
 - Allow for third-party scrutinization of investigations by an independent party, such as Safe Journalism. The Central Government has agreed, in principle, to collaborate with Safe Journalism to end impunity in murder cases. As such, Safe Journalism is well placed to fulfil this critical monitoring role.

To the international community:

- Continue to support Pakistani initiatives aimed at protecting journalists. Specifically, the international community should support the further development of Safe Journalism, an initiative by journalists, legal and political experts with the aim of countering impunity for murders of journalists in Pakistan. Safe Journalism collaborates with authorities to end impunity in cases of murders of journalists by increasing the strength, transparency and objectivity of investigations.

To the Sindh Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners and Federal Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Professionals:

- Explore the idea of a Joint Action Committee together with civil society partners, to assist in the implementation and execution of the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021.
- Order an inquiry into the murder of Shan Dahar, focussing on the arrest of absconders and the summoning of identified witnesses. Both commissions operate under specific legal frameworks aimed at combatting impunity for crimes against journalists, and are equipped to initiate inquiries into journalist killings, as specified under the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act 2021.

A Safer World For The Truth