

ALI AHAD

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

System and Software Security; Cyber Forensics; Malware Analysis

EDUCATION

University of Maryland

Ph.D. in Electrical & Computer Engineering
Advisor - Prof. Yonghwi Kwon

January 2024 – Present
Expected Graduation - 2025

University of Virginia

MS Computer Science

August 2020 – August 2023
GPA: 4.0/4.0

Lahore University of Management Science

BS Computer Science
Graduation with High Merit

August 2016 – June 2020
Major GPA: 3.90/4.0
CGPA: 3.52/4.0

WORK EXPERIENCE

Software Intern, Security - NVIDIA

September 2023 – January 2024

- Working on a project focused on TPM attestation, including AK provisioning, RIM generation, and evidence reporting mechanism.

Research Assistant - UVA

August 2020 – Present

Supervised by Prof. Yonghwi Kwon

- Published 5 papers (CCS'21, FSE'21, S&P'22, S&P'23, and ASPLOS'24).
- Led two projects, with 2 internal and 7 external collaborators, to first-author publications in S&P'23 and ASPLOS'24.
- Mentored one undergraduate student (intern at Amazon for Summer'22).

Developer Advocate - Educative, inc.

December 2019 – August 2020

- Created JavaScript course consisting of 137 lessons, 264 Coding playgrounds, and 4 projects.
- Deployed 300+ coding playgrounds and 62 coding challenges across 4 courses in JavaScript, C/C++, and Python.
- Collaborated with 2 external authors to deploy two courses under strict deadlines.

Research Assistant - LUMS

January 2019 – June 2020

Supervised by Prof. Fareed Zaffar

- Completed one project (published in NDSS'22) in collaboration with STS Lab at UIUC.

PUBLICATIONS

[1] **FreePart: Hardening Data Processing Software via Framework-based Partitioning and Isolation,**

Ali Ahad, Gang Wang, Chung Hwan Kim, Suman Jana, Zhiqiang Lin, and Yonghwi Kwon, *In Proc. of the 29th International Conference on Architectural Support for Programming Languages and Operating Systems (ASPLOS '24)*

[2] **PyFET: Forensically Equivalent Transformation for Python Binary Decompilation,**

Ali Ahad, Chijung Jung, Ammar Askar, Doowon Kim, Taesoo Kim, and Yonghwi Kwon, *In Proc. of the 44th IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (S&P '23)*

- [3] **SwarmFlawFinder: Discovering and Exploiting Logic Flaws of Swarm Algorithms**, Chijung Jung, **Ali Ahad**, Yuseok Jeon, and Yonghwi Kwon, *In Proc. of the 43rd IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (S&P '22)*
- [4] **Forensic Analysis of Configuration-based Attacks**, Muhammad Adil Inam*, Wajih Ul Hassan*, **Ali Ahad**, Adam Bates, Rashid Tahir, Tianyin Xu, and Fareed Zaffar, *In Proc. of the 29th Network and Distributed System Security Symposium (NDSS '22)*
- [5] **Swarmbug: Debugging Configuration Bugs in Swarm Robotics**, Chijung Jung, **Ali Ahad**, Jinho Jung, Sebastian Elbaum, and Yonghwi Kwon, *In Proc. of 29th ACM SIGSOFT International Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (FSE'21)*
- [6] **Spinner: Automated Dynamic Command Subsystem Perturbation**, Meng Wang, Chijung Jung, **Ali Ahad**, and Yonghwi Kwon, *In Proc. of 28th ACM Conference on Computer and Communications Security (CCS'21)*

PROJECTS

Forced-execution of Python binaries using CPython

April 2021 – June 2021

Research Project - UVA

- Customized CPython interpreter to enable execution of all program flows. Achieved 100% coverage for 100 sample python binaries.
- Crafted a logging mechanism within CPython to track dataflows and coverage on run-time.

Tracking fine-grained file changes at kernel level

October 2019 – December 2019

Research Project - LUMS

- Wrote a **kernel-module** to hook and monitor sys-calls modifying targeted files.
- Reduced overall log size from tracking file writes by 95% by crafting a Python program to process logs with accommodating file-diffs in system provenance.

Obfuscation of code by flattening of control flow of binaries

June 2019 – September 2019

Research Project - LUMS

- Made **LLVM passes** to analyze and shuffle program control flow to obfuscate it. No impact on correctness of resulting program executions.

TECHNICAL STRENGTHS

Languages	Python, C, C++, BASH, Dart, Javascript, Golang
Frameworks & Libraries	LLVM, Flutter, React-Native, Flask, Vue JS
Reverse Engineering	Uncompyle6, Decompyle3, IDA
Software Testing	American Fuzzy Lop (AFL), KLEE
Miscellaneous	Git, Linux, Postman, Wireshark, Docker

RELEVANT COURSES

Program Analysis	Software Analysis, Program Analysis
Security	Mobile & IoT Security, Network Security & Privacy, Cyber Forensics
Systems	Computer Architecture, Operating Systems
Machine Learning	Intro. to Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning
Networks	Internet Infrastructure, Network-Centric Computing

AWARDS AND HONORS

Computer Science Scholar Fellowship, UVA
Dean's Honor List, LUMS

August 2020 – December 2023
Fall'19 & Spring'20