



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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OF PAKISTAN

AT THE
HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT

SIXTY FIRST SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Geneva,
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Mr. Chairman,

I congratulate you on chairing the 61st session of the Commission on Human Rights. We wish you success and assure you of our delegation's full cooperation. We also thank High Commissioner Louise Arbour for bringing into focus some important themes.

2. A fair and balanced international human rights system is vital for the promotion and protection of human rights globally. The Commission on Human Rights is a pivotal organ of the United Nations for achieving this goal. States as well as civil society need to work together to free the Commission of politicization.

Mr. Chairman,

3. Islam does not recognize any differentiation on the basis of caste, creed, colour or religion. At his final congregation, the Prophet (PBUH) gave a vision of the society based on principles of fairness, equality, justice, brotherhood, peace and opportunities for all. Islam demands greater emphasis on Haqooq-ul-Ibad (Rights of People) than Haqooq-Allah (Rights of God).

4. To promote the rights of the "ibad"- the people, I would highlight the following points:

One, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding are extremely important for the promotion of human rights within societies as well as the international level. In this spirit, President Musharraf has presented the concept of "enlightened moderation". This aims at promoting understanding, harmony and cooperation between Islam and other religions and cultures.

Two, an enabling environment is crucial for the realization of all fundamental rights. Making laws are easy, implementing them need commitment, effort and capacity building. In this context, administrative and financial support is required not only from the government but also from the civil society and the international community.

Three, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment often contribute to human rights violations. The international community should focus its attention on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights including the right to development.

Four, political disputes and conflicts lead to human rights violations. There is a need to address the root causes of such conflicts and to find just solution.

Five, governments have an obligation to protect their citizens against crimes and criminals. This should not be seen as a license to impunity.

Mr. Chairman,

5. In Pakistan we are committed to realize the vision of our founding father Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah of a modern, moderate and tolerant Pakistan. In 2004, the Government took some landmark decisions. These include:

- i. President Musharraf has announced the establishment of an Independent Human Rights Commission which would be a statutory body conferred with broad and wide-ranging powers to investigate human rights abuses. The draft bill has been approved by the Cabinet and will now be presented before the Parliament.
- ii. We signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in November 2004.
- iii. Democracy is consolidating in Pakistan. The Parliament and provincial assemblies, are functional as legislative bodies and forums for debate on national issues. The local government system has ushered a new era of the true empowerment of the people at grass roots level. In all, 6458 local governments are working with financial and administrative autonomy.
- iv. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without the full involvement of women in all spheres of life. With 33% seats in the local bodies, about 36,000 women councilors are working in all tiers of the local government. Nearly 20 percent of the parliamentary seats are occupied by women.
- v. The National Commission on the Status of Women is not only focused on eliminating discrimination against women but also in creating employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for women. Micro-credit programmes have been launched by the Government as well as NGOs.
- vi. Practices such as 'honour killings' are rampant in many societies. In Pakistan the Parliament has recently adopted a new law that prescribes capital punishment for the crimes committed against women in the name of honour. We are ready to further improve it.
- vii. The Constitution of Pakistan and laws provide equal status and rights to the followers of all religions. The separate electorate system has been replaced with joint electorates in repose to the demand by minorities. In addition, 10 seats in the federal parliament and 23 in provincial parliaments have been reserved for minorities.
- viii. The National Commission on Child Welfare and Development ensures the fulfillment of our obligations as signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- ix. Capacity building projects are being undertaken for the judiciary. These will help enhance their catalyst role for the implementation of international human rights standards. Also, many reforms in law and the legal system are in the pipeline. These will be presented before the Parliament soon. We fiercely pursue criminals who violate human rights and are refining our legal instruments and streamlining our administrative machinery.

Mr. Chairman,

6. Year after year, this Commission has heard statements about the need to protect the rights of people of Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the information documented by leading NGOs and the international media since 1989, thousands of Kashmiris have lost their lives or have disappeared. The Kashmiri people and their leaders face restrictions on political activities as well as on the freedom of their expression and opinion.

7. Mr. Chairman, the people of Indian Held Kashmir must be given their right of self-determination provided for in the UN Security Council resolutions. In the current dialogue process between Pakistan and India, in order to improve the deteriorating human rights situation, and to work towards a just resolution of this long standing dispute, we have made a number of constructive proposals. These include working out mutually acceptable modalities for associating the True Representatives of the Kashmiri people with the dialogue process, and the appointment of High Representatives, of both countries, with a defined mandate to promote a peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in association with the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

8. Recently, Pakistan and India have agreed to start a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. Pakistan wants to work sincerely and earnestly for a win win solution. As we strive towards this goal, the rights of the Kashmiris cannot be shelved.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.