

[ALRC Statement] PAKISTAN: Human rights situation requires Human Rights Council's attention

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An Oral Intervention submitted by the Asian Legal Resource Centre to the 6th session of the Human Rights Council

PAKISTAN: Human rights situation requires Human Rights Council's attention

Thank you, Mr. President.

I wish to address the Council as both a human rights defender and a victim of human rights abuses in Pakistan. The situation in the country is not gaining the attention it deserves here. The media are being silenced, human rights defenders face grave reprisals, torture is endemic and the country ranks amongst the highest perpetrators of forced disappearances in Asia, alongside Sri Lanka.

The whereabouts of at least 5,000 people disappeared by the State since 2001, including up to 4,000 people from Balochistan province, remain unknown. Of 300 cases before Pakistan's courts, the Supreme Court has secured the release of 105 individuals being held in army torture camps. President General Musharaff has confessed in his autobiography that 600 people have been handed to the USA for detention in Guantanamo Bay since 9/11 in exchange for money, although the total is estimated at 1200 persons.

In 2007, at least 1,100 people have been tortured in custody. Torture is extremely brutal and impunity rules. 24 year-old Mr. Hazoor Buksh Malik's genitals were cut off by the police in Sindh province during torture in January, days before he was to be married. He was arrested for not having identification papers on him. The authorities, including the Federal Minister on Narcotics, have since reportedly colluded to guarantee impunity.

Threats against the increasingly vocal judiciary and Chief Justice, who was recently unconstitutionally suspended for four months for taking up cases of disappearances, are again increasing. Over 2,000 political workers have been arrested before the upcoming presidential elections.

Pakistan still hasn't even ratified the ICCPR and ICESCR. The Council must act to bring an end to mass disappearances.

I myself have become a victim of cruel reprisals. I was able to achieve a resettlement plan for some 300,000 people under threat of forced eviction and displacement resulting from the government's Lyrai Expressway Project, with the assistance from the Special Procedures. However, on November 8, 2004, my son was kidnapped and his tortured, mutilated body was dumped at my office in Karachi two days later. The government has flatly refused to conduct an autopsy on my son. Nobody has been arrested and the investigation has been closed down, while threats continue. My son was kidnapped, tortured and murdered to punish me for my human rights work.

Video: rtsp://webcast.un.org/ondemand/conferences/unhrc/sixth/hrc070924pm-eng.rm?start=00:37:03&end=00:39:56

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About ALRC: *The Asian Legal Resource Centre is an independent regional non-governmental organisation holding general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It is the sister organisation of the Asian Human Rights Commission. The Hong Kong-based group seeks to strengthen and encourage positive action on legal and human rights issues at local and national levels throughout Asia.*

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