

[ALRC Statement] PAKISTAN: Human rights groups welcome Louise Arbour's statement on Pakistan

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Oral Intervention by the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) to the Sixth Session of the Human Rights Council, December 11, 2007, supported by the Dutch Lawyers for Lawyers Foundation (L4L) and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC)

Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madame Louise Arbour

Delivered by: Baseer Naweed

PAKISTAN: Human rights groups welcome Louise Arbour's statement on Pakistan

Thank you Mr. President,

The Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), the Dutch Lawyers for Lawyers Foundation (L4L) and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) welcome the statement made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madame Louise Arbour, concerning the ongoing, deep political and human rights crisis in Pakistan.

In particular we remain shocked by the fact that a member of the Human Rights Council, notably one that is on the Consultative Group that will select future Special Procedures mandate-holders, has arbitrarily detained Special Rapporteur Asma Jahangir and threatened Special Representative Hina Jilani with arrest if she returned to Pakistan. Furthermore, massive attacks on the independence and members of the judiciary, as well as journalists, will lead to grave long-lasting damage to the enjoyment of democracy and human rights in the country.

We recall that General Musharraf declared a State of Emergency on November 3, 2007, on the false pretext of countering terrorism, and then abused its powers to terminate the country's increasingly independent judiciary. The Supreme Court has been filled with cronies. Under the emergency many fundamental rights have been suspended.

Currently, some 46 judges from the higher judiciary remain under house arrest. Over 8'000 persons were arrested following the State of Emergency, including over 3'500 lawyers and 500 journalists, many of whom remain in detention, and re-arrests continue. Many have been subjected to torture while in detention.

We welcome the High Commissioner's recommendation that all corrective measures be taken to restore confidence in a fully independent judicial system in Pakistan. We would like to ask the High Commissioner to be more specific on what measures are required in order to do this?

Madame Arbour, do you agree that the Chief Justice and all other members of the recently ousted judiciary should be released and reinstated without any delay?

Do you agree that we should also go further and ensure that all human rights violations in Pakistan in recent years, which include thousands of forced disappearances and many more cases of torture and other grave rights abuses, are immediately addressed by this Council and the government of Pakistan?

We are of the view that Pakistan's actions require strong condemnation by this Council. The Council must send a team of experts to look into human rights violations in the country that must be given full access, notably to all places of detention. Furthermore, the country should be immediately removed from the Special Procedures mandate-holders selection process. We also believe that Pakistan's suspension from the Human Rights Council is fully justified and urge the international community to take, in your words, all possible corrective measures with regard to the above.

Thank you.

Baseer on the crisis in Pakistan: [video](#)

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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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