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Oral Statement delivered by Ms. Gayoon Baek on behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA),
International Movement Against Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) and
Pax Romana ICMICA-MIIC

8th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review - Pakistan

Thursday, 12 June 2008

Mr. President,

Firstly we would like to put on record our grave concerns and disappointment at the constant denials and inadequate responses of the government of Pakistan during the UPR working group as well as the plenary session this afternoon. During the UPR working group, the official delegation led by parliamentarians representing the newly formed government in Islamabad defended the previous government by painting a positive picture of human rights situation in Pakistan over the past few years. Rather than denying and shoving under the carpet what continues to happen with the weaker segments of society, it is most imperative that the new government of Pakistan recognize the oppression in some cases and indifference in others exercised by the military-led governments of the very recent past in dealing with political workers, human rights defenders, lawyers, judges, women, children from poor communities and religious minorities.

The status of women in Pakistan continues to be undermined by discriminatory laws and also malpractices in the name of culture which the state does little to check. Those belonging to religious minorities face social and economic pressures besides being subjected to hostile laws. The conditions created by the very existence of these laws have had a deep negative effect on the social fabric of Pakistan making women and children belonging to minority sects and faiths most vulnerable, physically as well as psychologically.

Mr. President,

During the Interactive Dialogue at the UPR working group, several states also asked questions about which safeguards the Government of Pakistan had taken to protect the human rights of minorities in Pakistan, including the so-called Scheduled Caste Hindus. In response to such questions, the delegation outright denied the existence of caste-based discrimination in Pakistan by stating that there was no such form of discrimination and no Dalits in the country. New research, however, point to the fact that caste-based discrimination is indeed a reality for approximately two million people in Pakistan, and that the majority of bonded labourers in agriculture are Scheduled Caste Hindus. We recommend to the Government of Pakistan to acknowledge this form of discrimination; to prevent the exploitation of bonded labourers; and take effective measures, in line with other affected countries, in order to eliminate this form of discrimination.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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