

**United Nations Human Rights Council  
37<sup>th</sup> Regular Session  
Agenda Item 6**

**Oral Statement of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)  
On the Universal Periodic Review outcome for Pakistan**

**PAKISTAN: AMEND BLASPHEMY LAWS, END MILITARY COURT CIVILIAN  
TRIALS, COMBAT IMPUNITY**

19 March 2018

Mr. President,

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) regrets that Pakistan has not supported recommendations related to amending its blasphemy laws, ensuring its counter-terrorism measures are compatible with human rights, and combatting impunity for serious human rights violations.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws are frequently misused; blatantly discriminate against minority religions and sects; infringe upon the rights to freedom of expression and religion; and give rise to serious fair trial concerns. The Government has failed to amend them in accordance with its international law obligations.

In January 2015, Pakistan empowered military courts to try people accused of terrorism-related offences. The ICJ has [documented](#) serious fair trials violations in the operation of military courts including: denial of the right to counsel of choice; failure to disclose the charges against the accused; denial of a public hearing; and a very high number of convictions based on "confessions" without adequate safeguards against torture and other ill-treatment.

The Government has also failed to take steps to combat impunity for serious human rights violations such as extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture and other ill-treatment, which are facilitated by laws such as the Actions (in aid of civil power) Regulation and other national security legislation.

Despite repeated commitments to do so, Pakistan has also not enacted legislation to recognize torture or enforced disappearance as a distinct, autonomous offence in its penal code.

The ICJ therefore urges the Government to reconsider, accept and implement UPR recommendations to:

1. Ensure that military courts have no jurisdiction over civilians, including for terrorism-related offences;
2. Repeal or amend all blasphemy laws, in line with international standards; and
3. Ensure all perpetrators of serious human rights violations – including enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings – are brought to justice.

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