



Interfaith International

Non-Governmental Organization with special consultative status with ECOSOC

Human Rights Council 7th session

Agenda Item 9: Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance; Follow-up and Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action

Intervention by Nasir Aziz Khan

Mr. Chairman

I am privileged to share with the world community the concerns regarding the practice of discrimination in Pakistan. Pakistan literally means the land of pure so it is expected that in the land of pure, people live in harmony and share the grieves and sorrows in tune with each other. But contrary to the common notion of this land of pure lies a gruesome reality where discrimination is the order of the day. Though there is a presence of women in legislatures yet in generality and reality women continue to be discriminated at social political and economic levels. The condition of rural women is far from being explained in words. Where on one side the riches are spending handsomely to educate their daughters, on the other rural women are discouraged to attain higher education.

Pakistan has not only been involved in gender discrimination but religious as well. Recently the Ahmadiya community in Pakistan decided to boycott the elections in Pakistan on account of separate electorate for Ahmadiya community. The division of electorate on the basis of religion is strictly in contravention of the underlying principles of various conventions of United Nations on human rights.

One example of this discrimination is found in Pakistani legislation that promotes a culture of intolerance, division and extremism. The legislation is the Blasphemy Laws 295 B and C and 298 A, B, and C of the Penal Code which deals with offences pertaining to religion. The offences carry the death penalty for their violation. Since the mandatory death sentence was introduced as a result of the Amendment Act No.3 of 1986 to Section 295-C, many accused were killed, in some cases, even before they were brought to trial.

The situation in Pakistan occupied Kashmir is beyond worst. The people of so called Azad Kashmir are living in a state where life itself is a burden and azadi (freedom) is a long standing desire. People are used or rather misused to carry military operations both in and outside the state.

People of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir still live in a pathetic condition and don't have any freedom to exercise their fundamental rights. The civil and political liberties are restricted and dominated by the military and intelligence agencies of Pakistan.

Mr. Chairman

Ms Asma Jahangir, who is the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan the report says: "Azad Kashmir is a land of strict curbs on political pluralism, freedom of expression, and freedom of association; a muzzled press; banned books; arbitrary arrest and detention and torture at the hands of the Pakistani military and police; and discrimination against refugees from Jammu and Kashmir state."

It says Kashmiri nationalists are singled out for discrimination because they do not support the idea of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan.

Mr. Chairman,

The bureaucracy which constitutes the basis of state affairs is directly under the control of Pakistani establishment and all key portfolios e.g. Chief Secretary, Inspector general of Police, Director General and Finance Secretary etc. are bestowed to Pakistani nationals which otherwise are right of the inhabitants of the land. The discrimination in educational curriculum is also part of the Pakistani policies. Urdu which is the language of Pakistanis, Kashmiris are forced to make it as their official language instead of Phari which is their mother tongue and till date is not included in the school syllabus because of the colonial attitude of Pakistani establishment. Same is the situation in Gilgit and Baltistan where unemployment is increasing day in and day out and the people don't have right to elect their representatives and choose their mother language to run the affairs of the area. The sufferings and miseries are rapidly increasing due to the discrimination in their rights guaranteed by the UN.

The people of North West Frontier are subjected to abject poverty coupled with economic and social discrimination on the part of Government of Pakistan. The education policy is framed in such a way so as to give way to sectarian differences. There is denial of religious freedom to soldiers who belong to Gilgit Baltistan. In Gujranwala cantonment of Pakistan during Eid festival on 20th October 2006, more than 15 soldiers (from Gilgit Baltistan) were dismissed and sent behind bars by Lt. Colonel Fateh Mohammad, Commanding Officer of 14 NLI because of their prayers as shia prayers do not match their prayers. The people of NWFP (specially the Shia community) is discriminated at the time of employment. Though on papers the employment has to be given on the basis of merits but in reality it is subjected to the religious and sectarian considerations of Pakistani authorities. People are involved in mental gymnastics day in and day out in order to ensure their living. History has shown that in the past few decades, the advent of terrorism, particularly random violence engineered by extremist groups that ^{case} has had a direct impact on the basic rights of people

Mr. Chairman, In conclusion we hope the new democratically-elected rulers of Pakistan will begin to deal concretely with the discrimination rampant in their country.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman