



National statement, delivered during Panel Discussion on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests, at the 48th session of Human Rights Council

29 September 2021

Madam President,

We thank the High Commissioner and panelists for their insightful remarks.

We agree the right to peaceful assembly and association is a ‘gateway right’, which has historically enabled people to fight for and secure other basic rights, freedoms and justice.

As a participatory democracy, Pakistan remains a firm supporter of the right to peaceful assembly as the bedrock for strengthening rule of law, civic participation and human rights.

Madam President,

New and emerging digital technologies have emerged as a ‘double-edged sword’.

In today’s globalized world, rights-holders are more empowered to instantly access information, organize and engage in offline and online activism. Nonetheless, these technologies have also become conveyor-belts and amplifiers of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.

Unfortunately, the global community has witnessed unregulated proliferation of surveillance industry, which continues to prioritize profits over basic human rights principles and responsibilities. Recent events have once again brought to limelight the disturbing availability and use of spywares to target and silence human rights defenders, journalists and other actors of civil society.

We, therefore, call for Council’s continued attention towards the potential human rights risks and opportunities associated with rapid technological advancement. We also stress upon the need for updating the global human rights framework in light of these new realities and challenges.

Madam President,

We share concerns that the right to peaceful assembly is under assault globally from unlawful physical and digital restrictions. These trends are more pronounced in UN-recognized situations of foreign occupation, where peaceful protest provides the main vehicle to people engaged in legitimate struggle for realization of their right to self-determination.

The systematic and unabated disenfranchisement of people’s right to peaceful assembly, association and expression in occupied Jammu & Kashmir is a case in point. In this regard, we invite panelists’ views how the Council and its allied mechanisms can provide effective legal protection to people, living under foreign occupation, against such violations. I thank you.