



**National statement delivered by Mr. Muhammad Hussain, Counsellor, during the Interactive Dialogue with Working Group on Enforced Disappearances at the 48<sup>th</sup> session of Human Rights Council**

**(21 September 2020)**

Madam President,

Pakistan thanks the Working Group for acknowledging our cooperation with the mandate, and assures it of our continued constructive engagement.

As a parliamentary democracy, with free media, independent judiciary and civil society, we have a policy of zero tolerance against enforced disappearance. In order to translate this policy approach into concrete action, we have put in place robust institutional and administrative mechanisms.

An independent and well-resourced Commission of Inquiry is investigating alleged cases of missing persons, with reasonably good disposal rate of over 60 percent.

In order to bring justice closer to affected families, the Commission regularly conducts public hearings in provincial capitals, and provides legal remedy free-of-cost. We are also discussing ways and means to financially assist affected families.

In order to consolidate our national efforts, the Government has introduced a bill, criminalizing enforced disappearance, which has been advanced for the legislative process at the Parliament.

The clarification of high number of alleged cases by the Working Group is a concrete evidence of Pakistan's strong commitment and efforts to uphold fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens.

Pakistan thanks the Working Group for its monitoring, reporting and public expression of concerns about the alarming situation in occupied Jammu & Kashmir since 05<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

During the last two years, the scale and magnitude of forced disappearance in the occupied territory has further escalated. Fate of hundreds of Kashmiris, detained incommunicado on mere verbal orders, still remain unknown. Many families fear that their missing relatives have been killed by occupation forces during fake encounters. The presence of over 8,500 unmarked, mass graves in the occupied territory adds to these apprehensions.

We, therefore, echo the Working Group's call on India that thorough and independent investigations should be carried out to determinate the fate of missing Kashmiris, and to hold those found responsible to account. I thank you.