



**National statement delivered by Mr. Umair Khalid, Second Secretary, during the Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Independence of Judges and Lawyer at the 50<sup>th</sup> session of Human Rights Council**

**20 June 2022**

Mr. President,

We share the SR's viewpoint that free practice of legal profession is central to upholding rule of law, protecting human rights and fostering democracy.

Pakistan's Constitution guarantees the fundamental right of its citizens to legal counsel and due process, and therefore, by extension, provides constitutional protection to legal profession.

The Government has taken a wide range of measures to enable lawyers in the discharge of their duties without fear or interference of any kind. For instance, special security coverage has been provided to lawyers engaged in sensitive cases.

Pakistan has active bar associations, which are vital platforms to safeguard and advance legitimate interests and rights of legal fraternity. As a result, lawyers have been agents of positive judicial activism.

Pakistan draws the SR's attention towards the dire situation of lawyers in occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

During the last three years, the occupation regime has been arbitrarily detaining, torturing and summarily executing Kashmiri lawyers and activists to muzzle legitimate dissent against its illegal policy of demographic changes. The illegal arrest of President of Jammu & Kashmir High Court Bar Association Mian Abdul Qayoom and cold-blooded murder of Babar Qadri are illustrative of these trends.

We therefore encourage the SR to raise public concerns about the situation of lawyers in occupied Kashmir, and press the country concerned to end its egregious violations.