

**12<sup>th</sup> Session of the Forum on Minority Issues:**  
**“Education, Language and Human Rights of Minorities”**  
**28 November 2019**

**National Statement**

Education in and teaching of minorities’ language is vital for preserving and promoting their distinctive cultural and religious identity.

Currently, over a dozen languages are being taught and spoken in Pakistan. Our multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic social fabric manifests itself through linguistic diversity, safeguarded by the Constitution, laws and policies.

Effective implementation of national measures has infused a spirit of peaceful co-existence and harmony in the country. Pakistan’s recent initiatives to open the Kartarpur corridor and establish Baba Guru Nanak University are its most recent concrete manifestations to advance minority rights.

Enhancing access to quality education for all, without any discrimination, also remains the central plank of Government’s people-centric development agenda.

In many parts of the world, minorities’ right to learn and use their language is threatened by rise of extremist ideologies, toxic populist narratives, and hate crimes.

These worrying trends are also manifest in our region. Minorities have been arbitrarily stripped of their citizenship, undermining their right to learn and use their language. This is the latest act in the long list of state-sanctioned persecution, institutional discrimination, vigilante violence and mob lynching.

A re-writing of history is underway in pursuance of a supremacist, exclusive Hinduvata ideology. Among some of the glaring forms of this ideology include the state-sponsored demolition of historic Babri Mosque by fanatics and its unfortunate endorsement by the highest court of law.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues has already documented these developments in our region in his reports of 2016 and 2019.

Co-Chairs,

Population living under foreign occupation does not qualify as a minority. However, the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention enjoins certain obligations and responsibilities on the occupying power. The unlawful and unilateral actions taken by India in the occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir on 05 August 2019 need to be seen from this perspective.

The Indian actions are aimed at altering demographic make-up and cultural identity of Kashmiri community. With education institutions, mosques and various modes of communication under a forced lockdown of nearly four months, various rights relevant to the theme of this year's Minority Forum are being violated in IOJ&K.

Therefore, we call on the international and human rights community to respond to these gross violations of human rights in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir as well as in India.

Thank you!