



National Statement, delivered by Ambassador Tahir Hussain Andrabi, Deputy Permanent Representative, during the Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Situation of Human Rights Defenders at 46th session of Human Rights Council

(08 March 2021)

Madam President,

Pakistan thanks the SR for her presentation.

As a participatory democracy, Pakistan is home to a vibrant civil society. We have taken various measures to provide human rights activists with an enabling and safe environment to carry out their legitimate and peaceful work. Free media, independent judiciary and robust parliamentary system at federal and provincial level ensure that space for human rights defenders is not trampled upon.

We share her concerns that attacks against activists, especially those defending rights of indigenous people, are recurrent in conflict situations.

The plight of civil society in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir is illustrative of this disturbing trend.

Since 05th August 2019, India has scaled up its vicious crackdown on Kashmiri human rights defenders to crush dissent against its colonization project in the disputed territory.

India brands Kashmiri civil society actors as terrorists as a pretext to illegally imprison, torture, and summarily execute them. Local press in Kashmir has been muzzled under the oppressive media policy. Journalists have been criminally sanctioned for speaking out against Indian atrocities.

The persisting physical and digital restrictions have infringed upon rights of Kashmiri activists to freely express, assemble and associate. Social media activism has been outlawed, as hundreds of Twitter users in Kashmir have been coerced into silence and self-censorship.

In a systematic pattern, Indian authorities raid local Kashmiri NGOs, force-close newspapers and intimidating leading activists, including Parveena Ahangar, Khurram Parvez, and Parvaiz Ahmad Bukhari to name a few.

These reprisal attacks have been termed by the UN Special Procedures as representative of 'a clear pattern of silencing independent reporting' by India in occupied Kashmir.

The miscarriage of justice in cases of Babar Qadri, Asif Sultan and Asiya Andrabi exemplify the widespread impunity of India's systematic repression of Kashmiri civil society, enabled by draconian PSA, AFSPA and UAPA. The two UN Kashmir Reports have also recorded in detail these troubling facts.

We, therefore, urge the Rapporteur to closely monitor the alarming situation of Kashmiri civil society, and continue to report it to the Council. Thank you.