



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN

Geneva

National Statement, delivered by Ambassador Tahir Hussain Andrabi, Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, during the Interactive Dialogue with Assistant Secretary-General on reprisals, at the 45th session of Human Rights Council

(30 September 2020)

Madam President,

Engagement of civil society with the UN human rights machinery plays a vital role in advancing the global human rights agenda. Therefore, reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN must be dealt with effectively.

As a participatory democracy, Pakistan has a vibrant civil society. We have taken several steps to provide it with an enabling and safe environment to carry out its legitimate work. One alleged case does not reflect any confirmed pattern of harassment or intimidation.

Pakistan strongly echoes the Secretary-General's concerns expressed in his Report about the systematic use of reprisals by India to silence Kashmiri civil society.

Since last August, India has further intensified persecution of activists, journalists and lawyers in a bid to hide its atrocities and muzzle reporting on its illegal measures to alter demography of the disputed territory from the UN human rights mechanisms.

India continues to illegally imprison, torture, harass and extra-judicially kill Kashmiri human rights defenders, especially women, with full impunity under the cover of several draconian laws, such as Public Safety; Armed Forces Special Powers and Unlawful Activities Prevention Acts.

The 14-months old physical and digital siege has thrown the occupied territory into an information black-hole. An iron curtain remains drawn on IOJ&K: civil society is denied unhindered access; foreign media is prohibited and local press is given gag orders under the new Media policy of May 2020.

The report refers to imposition of arbitrary travel ban against Kashmiri activists who want to attend the Human Rights Council session in Geneva. Since the murder of lawyer Jalil Andrabi in the mid 90s, such travel bans and reprisals have been part of India's policy to silence the voices against its abuses at international forums.

The cold-blooded murder of Mr. Shujaat Bukhari and Babar Qadri; continued incommunicado detention of Asif Sultan and Asiya Andrabi; and harassment of Khurram Pervaiz, Kamran Yousaf and Aquib Javed are just some examples of India's repression of Kashmiri civil society actors.

The two UN Kashmir Reports have also documented numerous abuses, being perpetrated against human rights defenders and journalists in IOJ&K.



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We, therefore, urge the ASG to remain seized of the grave situation of reprisals in the occupied territory and continue to report them to the Council.

Thank you.