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OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED "HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL"**

**Written statement* submitted by Peace Worldwide, a non-governmental organization
in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 February 2007]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The Pakistani Police Force is regrettably the most corrupt force in Asia if not the world. It can be safely assumed that more than 90% of the force is corrupt, from the Inspector General of Police to a lowly ranked constable¹. Even provincial and federal ministers who head the Interior Ministry were found corrupt. Unethical or corrupt practices include:

- Bribe
- Gratuity
- Pilferage
- Dereliction of duty
- Intimidation
- Falsification of reports
- Misuse of public funds
- Misuse of public property
- Aiding and abetting known / habitual criminals
- Gang rape and sodomy
- Perverting the course of justice
- Denial of medical assistance to those tortured
- Denial of access to relatives / legal representation to temporarily confined prisoners
- Illegal confinement
- Forced confessions
- Kidnapping innocent citizens/relatives of alleged criminals / fugitives
- Aiding / abetting the sale of prohibited beverages & hard drugs
- Illegal search / seizure & harassment
- Indifferent attitude shown towards minorities
- Blackmail
- Extortion
- Human Smuggling
- Terrorist activities
- Character assassination

The Judiciary, the backbone of any civilized society, is irrevocably corrupt as well, ensuring that the culture of corruption not only survives but also thrives. In such an environment how can ordinary citizens depend on the legal system to redress their grievances? In the absence of punishment, ordinary citizens brazenly resort to a life of crime knowing all too well that law enforcers will accommodate them in sticky situations.

Torture of innocent citizens is routinely conducted all across Pakistan. Even police stations located in the capital - Islamabad are prone to this gross violation of human rights. A member of Christian minority Amjad Masih was recently hauled to the nearby Police station in Islamabad, severely beaten without provocation / indictment, by more than 4 officers until the victim succumbed to his injuries. Those officers who were involved in this gruesome act are still holding their posts. When such gross human rights violations occur in the capital right under the noses of the federal Government, foreign missions and international human rights organizations, just what can citizens in other cities and far-flung areas of Pakistan expect from their police force?

Religion continues to play a major role in the psyche of the police force. The police treat non-Muslims harshly. Countless cases of death in custody due to severe beating have taken

¹ This compiled report covers the period from November 2005 to December 2006.

place over the decades. The police in collaboration with the public often lay bogus Blasphemy charges against members of the Christian minorities even though the original dispute was either frivolous or unrelated to religion. Police frequently raid these Christian enclaves on the pretext of search and seizure of contraband, but usually end up sexually abusing the womenfolk, beating anyone who dare questions them and stealing, confiscating other expensive household goods. Any thought of reporting such raids to the higher ups remains just that, a thought.

Police officers deputized to prison duties mistreat non-Muslim prisoners, simple due to their religious convictions. Non-Muslim prisoners are assigned menial / degrading tasks, not allowed to worship, provided separate utensils and crockery, segregated living quarters usually located close to the toilets and are routinely harassed, tortured and hounded into embracing Islam. Promises of remission in sentences upon embracing Islam never materialize.

A recent high profile gang rape case made headlines for weeks on end. The victim was systematically raped by a group of police officers. A high ranking officer and his cohorts involved in the rape were promptly suspended by the provincial government, charged and are awaiting trial.

The victim and her young children have gone into hiding, while the victims immediate family are being threatened not to pursue the matter any further. The victim however, will have to live with the guilt of having taken on the police force, becoming homeless in the process, while the constant fear of retribution hangs over her head. The government will in due time close the chapter and all documents relating to this incident will either be shredded or vanishes in thin air.

During brief periods when democracy prevails, the police are treated as a private army of the politicians, every ruling party politician perverting the course of justice, suppressing opposition politicians, arbitrarily detaining opposition politicians, gagging the public, misappropriating public funds and property and applying bully tactics with the active support and blessing of the force.

The situation is once again similar when the army is in Government. Police officers become an effective tool to contain public outcry and protest, arbitrary detentions and other crimes against humanity. The army's dependence on the force as opposed as to that of a civilian government is far less, as the army has it's own personnel who can do a better job of intimidation and achieve the desired results instantaneously.

Naming and shaming creates deep embarrassment at the international level but often has only a moderate impact – if at all – at home. In order to effectively pressure government to reform the police, experience has shown that it is essential to confront those in power with hard evidence of policing problems, rather than unsubstantiated statistics and easily dismissible anecdotal stories. NGOs and other lobby groups have in the past raised concerns about bad policing with the Interior Minister, the Prime Minister and even the President. Despite reassurance that priority would be given in rectifying the situation, no visible changes occur, just cosmetic changes / appearances. In the absence of good Governance, the force invariably has a free reign in subverting the law and order situation.

Death cases in police custody: Examples

Death in police custody is routine in Pakistan, with Punjab being the more likely venue. Quite surprisingly, in all these cases the accused policemen are able to prove otherwise – armed with medical reports of their choice that points the suicide or death by heart attack. Pervaiz akhtar died after being allegedly tortured by the Faislabad police in April 2006; Shah Muhammad died in the custody of the Sialkot police in February 2006; Asif imadad died in February 2006 after being picked up by the Karachi police for alleged possession of drugs and Abdul Ghufar Sheikh died while in the custody of jacobabad police the same month.

In November 2005; 65 years old Muhammad Ashraf was picked up by the Rawalpindi police and later on found dead in a police lock up. Azmatullah and Imran died after being allegedly tortured by the Shiekupura police in September 2005; Saleem Ghazi died after torture by the Haripur police in August 2005 and Khalid Saifullah died in May 2005 after torture by the Sargodha police. Khalid's body was recovered from a canal. Similarly, Sajid Ali died in the custody of Vehari police in May 2005. The Pakistani Penal Code prescribes a murder case in death custody. The country signed the UN convention against torture in 1984 but the police usually use torture to extract confessions and bribes from detainees. Forced confessions are common.

Data collected by **Peace Worldwide** from different sources, for the year 2005, Punjab police topped the list of torture, illegal detentions and custodial killings with 848 cases of abuse reported against it. Sindh police (Province of Pakistan), with a score of 436 cases of abuse, came a poor second. According to the same source, crimes in custody committed against citizens by law enforcement personnel include deaths, mutilations, rape and sodomy. The situation is bad even in Islamabad – the seat of ultimate power in Pakistan. In October 2005, the staff of Kohsar police station, which had been declared a model police station, arrested Amjad Masih of France Colony located in F-7/2, Islamabad. He was charged with his alleged involvement in kidnapping – for – ransom case. Though Amjad was allegedly tortured to death at the police station, not even a single police official accused of torture was punished by the court because of lack of evidence. (A murder case was registered against the police officials with the involvement of Peace Worldwide).

It may be mentioned that as many as 10 deaths had occurred in Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi alone during the year 2006, through torture but the reason given by the jail authorities is always a heart attack whereas private medical reports show it as otherwise. It is surprising that the said heart attack victims fall under the ages 20-50 years while in almost all the cases there is no such medical history.

Additional Inspector General of Police and capital city police officer (CCPO), Lahore, Khwaja Khalid Farooq tells TNS that under the police reforms agenda, special emphasis is given on making torture in police stations a thing of the past. He says while there are judicial bailiffs to recover those detained illegally the police department has also developed a mechanism to root out this menace.

Note: this is not a comprehensive list of cases but only those that we are aware of from newspaper reports, lawyers, involvement of Peace Worldwide and NGO information.