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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Association MIMAN, 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.

[22 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Enforced Disappearances of Baloch People by Pakistan

We bring forth a matter of grave concern that has been shrouded in secrecy and sorrow for far too long. The enforced disappearances of Baloch individuals in Pakistan stand as a haunting reality that demands immediate attention, scrutiny, and intervention by the international community, especially the United Nations. This systematic violation of human rights, perpetuated with impunity, not only inflicts immense suffering on families and communities but also poses a significant threat to regional stability and peace.

The Tragedy of Enforced Disappearances: In the region of Balochistan, Pakistan, enforced disappearances have become a haunting and recurring nightmare for countless families. Individuals are abducted by state forces or security agencies without due process, often for expressing their opinions or advocating for the rights of their people. The victims are frequently denied access to legal representation, held incommunicado, and subjected to torture, inhumane treatment, or even extrajudicial execution. Their families are left in agony, uncertain of their loved ones' whereabouts or fates.

I want my father back says Sammi Deen Baloch. *1

"I started protesting after my father, Dr Deen Mohammed Baloch, was abducted from his hospital in Khuzdar, Balochistan, on 28 June 2009. I became an activist, raising my voice against the heinous crime of enforced disappearances: more than 5,000 people are missing in Balochistan." *2

Amnesty International (AI) describes victims of enforced disappearances as people "who have literally disappeared." According to AI, these are victims who go missing when state officials grab them from the streets or from their homes and then deny it or refuse to say where they are. *3

Sammi further says,

"In the 13 years since my father was taken, I have spent most of my time on roads, in front of journalists 'press clubs across Pakistan with a photograph in my hand, asking a simple question: "Where is my father? What is his crime?" *4

Balochistan has long been experiencing the trauma of enforced disappearances. It has become a norm for the people of Balochistan since the early 2000s.

Many of the forcibly disappeared Balochs particularly students have been killed and dumped by personnel of Pakistani secretive agencies accompanied by personnel of Pakistani Army or Frontier Corps, whereas, thousands are still believed to be languishing in Pakistani torture cells. They have disappeared tens of thousands of Baloch people in last two decades. *5

The families of the missing have endured immense hardships in their relentless search for their loved ones. They have undertaken long marches and staged protests in front of press clubs in major cities across Pakistan. *6

In 2014, Sammi, then 15 year old, along with other relatives of missing people, marched 2,000km (1,200 miles) over 116 days from Quetta to the capital, Islamabad. Thinking of Pakistan government would listen to their grievances and do something about the enforced disappearances. Yet she was wrong.

It's been more than 13 years of relentless struggle for her to know the truth and she has to go through daily ordeal to demand justice from the Pakistan government.

In one incident, she mentioned about the harassment, intimidation perpetrated by state and security authorities on her and other protestors.

"During this struggle she have never been as humiliated, harassed, beaten and verbally abused as I was at our recent peaceful protest in Karachi. One police man grasped my hand forcefully and another held me by the neck. I felt as if my bones were going to be fractured. My sister, Mehlab Baloch, was slapped three times. Bakhtawar, a fellow activist who was filming, had her phone snatched by the police. She was dragged along the road". *7

"Police mocked us after throwing us in their van. We were warned not to protest or else they would "drag and beat us" more and telling "You think you are a leader and are at the forefront. We will teach you a lesson". *8

"Our headscarves were removed."*9

The officers threatened them by saying to each other:

"Once their shalwars [trousers] are removed, then they will stop protesting." *10

Those Police officers even shamed them for protesting against the injustice done against Balochs.

"They called us disgraced women, accusing us of protesting to win fame and to appear in the media,"*11

Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP), a non-profit organization dedicated to the recovery of "missing persons," has completed 5000 days of protest against those responsible for enforced disappearances. VBMP has registered approximately 5000 cases of enforced disappearances that are yet to be resolved. *12

Enforced disappearances in Balochistan have catapulted Baloch people's lives in the province. The state and its security agencies use of a "kill and dump" policy for Baloch people and disappearances of students, lawyers, doctors, political activists is the issue world needs to be aware of, and there is urgent need to hold Pakistan responsible for the genocide committed against Balochs.

State of Impunity and Denial: The alarming lack of accountability for enforced disappearances in Balochistan underscores a deeply troubling culture of impunity. Families' relentless efforts to seek justice are met with indifference, misinformation, or outright denial by authorities. This erodes trust in the justice system and perpetuates a cycle of fear, silence, and helplessness among the Baloch population.

International Obligations Ignored: Pakistan is a signatory to international human rights conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which categorically prohibits enforced disappearances and guarantees the right to a fair trial and due process. The enforced disappearances in Balochistan not only breach these obligations but also undermine the credibility of the international human rights framework.

Impact on Regional Stability: The persistent enforced disappearances in Balochistan pose a significant threat to regional stability and peace. The anguish caused by these disappearances fosters a sense of injustice and resentment, which can fuel extremism and violence. The region's already fragile socio-political fabric is further strained, potentially destabilizing neighboring areas and endangering the broader peace in the region.

Urgent Plea for UN Intervention: Given the gravity of the situation, we earnestly implore the United Nations to intervene decisively in addressing the enforced disappearances in Balochistan. We call upon the UN to:

1. **Conduct an Independent Inquiry:** Establish an independent commission of inquiry to thoroughly investigate the enforced disappearances in Balochistan, identify perpetrators, and hold them accountable.
2. **Advocate for Victims' Rights:** Pressure the Pakistani government to release all individuals who have been subjected to enforced disappearances, provide information about their whereabouts, and ensure their safety.
3. **Ensure Access to Justice:** Facilitate the establishment of mechanisms that enable victims and their families to access justice, seek reparations, and restore their dignity.
4. **Raise International Awareness:** Utilize diplomatic channels to raise international awareness about the plight of Baloch victims and the urgent need for their protection.

In conclusion, the enforced disappearances of Baloch individuals in Pakistan is an affront to the principles of human rights and justice. The United Nations, as the global guardian of human rights, must act swiftly and decisively to alleviate the suffering of families, hold perpetrators accountable, and restore faith in the rule of law. By doing so, the UN can contribute to regional stability, peace, and the advancement of human rights in Balochistan and beyond.

Baloch Voice Association (BVA), Baloch Peoples Congress (BPC), Voice For Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP), Baloch Voice Foundation (BVF) ., NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

*1 Pakistan 5000 people disappeared missing balochistan <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/06/pakistan-5000-people-disappeared-missing-balochistan>

*2 Ibid.

*4 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/06/pakistan-5000-people-disappeared-missing-balochistan>

*6 Vanishing Voices | The Tragedy of Baloch Missing Persons

<https://www.thelearnersociety.com/2023/08/vanishing-voices-tragedy-of-baloch.html> Pakistan

*7 5000 people disappeared missing balochistan <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/06/pakistan-5000-people-disappeared-missing-balochistan>

*8 Pakistan 5000 people disappeared missing balochistan

*9 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/06/pakistan-5000-people-disappeared-missing-balochistan>

Ibid. *10 Ibid. *11 Ibid. *12 Vanishing Voices | The Tragedy of Baloch Missing Persons

<https://www.thelearnersociety.com/2023/08/vanishing-voices-tragedy-of-baloch.html>