



National Statement, delivered by Mr. Afaq Ahmed, Counsellor, during the Interactive Dialogue with Assistant Secretary-General on reprisals, at the 48th session of Human Rights Council

30 September 2021

Madam President,

Pakistan recognizes the importance of civil society's engagement with the UN human rights machinery. *Therefore, we agree that reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN must be held to account.*

As a vibrant democracy, Pakistan is proud of its civil society, and will continue to provide an enabling and safe environment for it to carry out its legitimate work. *One alleged case does not reflect a pattern of harassment or intimidation. We have institutional mechanisms to address such incidents.*

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

Thanks to India's heightened repression during the last two years, today, the occupied Jammu & Kashmir presents a hellscape for civil society actors. India's harassment of and reprisal against Kashmiri civil society are designed to mask its atrocities and illegal steps to alter the demography of the disputed territory from the world community.

As highlighted in the Report, illegal detention and custodial torture of Mr. Waheed Para by Indian security forces illustrates this disconcerting trend. His only crime was to raise concerns with the UN Security Council about India's serious violations of Kashmiri rights.

As India feigns its commitment to human rights at this august forum, its occupation forces continue to stop Kashmiri activists by force from attending the Council sessions.

The world's self-professed largest democracy is also denying access to independent human rights organizations and global media to the occupied territory, Kashmiri press has been gagged; and any brave Kashmiri calling India out for its atrocities is declared a 'terrorist', and unlawfully killed during a staged encounter.

The cold-blooded murder of Shujaat Bukhari and Babar Qadri; continued incommunicado detention of Asif Sultan; and harassment of Khurram Pervaiz, Qazi Shibli, and Aquib Javed are some other examples of India's attack on and criminalization of journalism in IIOJ&K.

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.