



**Statement, delivered by Mr. Muhammad Hussain, Counsellor, during the Interactive Dialogue with Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of Human Rights Council**

**20 September 2021**

Madam President,

Pakistan thanks the Working Group for this year's report and its thematic focus on arbitrary detention of human rights defenders.

We draw the Working Group's attention to the situation in occupied Jammu & Kashmir, where India continues to systematically use arbitrary detention to silence local dissent against demographic engineering of the occupied territory.

In run-up to 05<sup>th</sup> August 2019, and days following it, India resorted to large-scale illegal detentions-whose parallel is difficult to find in modern history. More than 13,000 Kashmiris, including children as young as 09 years old, were illegally arrested.

Hundreds of Kashmiri civilians are still languishing in far-flung, congested jails amidst the pandemic.

In order to cover up its heightened atrocities, during the last two years, the Hindutva Raj has specifically targeted Kashmiri activists under the cover of oppressive laws [*such as AFSPA, UAPA and PSA*]. A pliant judiciary is breeding impunity for these widely documented violations, as thousand of habeas corpus petitions remain pending before local courts.

Cases of custodial torture, killing and ill-treatment are also rampant.

The most recent example of Indian barbarity was the inhuman treatment of mortal remains of the stalwart Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Geelani. Syed Geelani was illegally detained for 50 years during his seven decades of peaceful struggle for rights of Kashmiri people. Despite his failing health and advancing age, his request for medical treatment was repeatedly denied.

We, therefore, urge the Working Group to closely follow the situation in IIOJ&K, call on India to accept an UN-led investigation into cases of arbitrary detentions, and hold to account those found responsible. I thank you.