



**Statement by Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs,  
at the High-Level Segment of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Mr. President,  
High Commissioner,  
Excellencies,**

Let me first congratulate you, Mr. President and the members of bureau on their election. I also commend the High Commissioner and his Office for their valuable work.

As we commemorate important anniversaries of the Universal and Vienna Declarations, the global state of human rights presents a mixed picture. In the past 75 years, we have witnessed the development of human rights law, norms and framework, as well as their regression and selectivity.

There is increasing prioritization of interests among universally agreed values - most evident from impunity to occupiers, who invoke terrorism bogey to suppress people pursuing their inalienable right to self-determination. The right to free speech is being exploited to denigrate followers of some faiths, their revered personalities and scriptures. New technologies are being deployed to amplify hate, disinformation and for incitement to violence.

Advocacy for mainstreaming right to development through early adoption of a legal instrument is dismissed even as the indivisibility of rights is grudgingly

acknowledged. Inequality, poverty, food scarcity and debt are pummeling the developing countries while the IFIs continue to operate as usual.

Human rights are at the center of all global issues we confront today. This places a special responsibility on States and the international human rights mechanisms and bodies to revisit approaches and re-calibrate responses.

**Mr. President,**

Pakistan remains fully committed to promotion and protection of human rights at home and abroad. This promise lies at the heart of our nationhood. It has shaped our constitution, laws and policies. It guides our approach to global human rights discourse.

Today, we proudly mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR as one of its drafters - Ms. Shaista Ikramullah championed inclusion of Article 16 on equal rights in marriage in this landmark document.

A few weeks ago, I was privileged to present Pakistan's fourth UPR report. I draw satisfaction that, over the years, we have strengthened our domestic human rights architecture by enacting progressive laws, upgrading institutional support, improving implementation and reinforcing parliamentary and judicial oversight.

But we have a long journey ahead. The pursuit, realization and sustained enjoyment of human rights is a dynamic continuum – not a finite, one-off event.

We thank all participating States for their constructive engagement in our UPR. We have initiated an inter-Ministerial process to reflect on the recommendations. Our focus remains on safeguarding and promoting the rights of minorities, women, children, transgender persons, persons with disabilities, and those adversely affected by the devastating floods last year.

**Mr. President,**

In our neighborhood, India's project to colonize the Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) and permanently alter its demography continues with impunity. India's unilateral and unlawful actions since August 2019 are an affront to the sanctity of global human rights' edifice, and a brazen defiance of international law and UNSC resolutions. It is ironic that on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR, Kashmiris in the IIOJK mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the denial of their fundamental human rights, especially their birthright to self-determination.

Long inured to impunity for its actions, India has been emboldened to deploy draconian laws to disenfranchise the Kashmiri people and to transform the Kashmiri majority into a minority in the internationally recognized disputed territory. The discomfiting silence of the flag-bearers for human rights has encouraged Indian proclivity to kill, maim, rape, and torture the Kashmiri youth and women.

Political expediency has condoned the Hindutva regime to dehumanize the Kashmiri people by falsely equating their legitimate pursuit of rights with the canard of "terrorism." For too long, the Indian oppression machinery has used state terrorism to gag media, silence human rights defenders, and deny independent reporting and assessment of the situation. Now, the Indian occupying authorities have stepped up collective punishment of Kashmiris by demolishing residential homes and terminating land leases to deprive Kashmiris of their livelihoods.

The two Kashmir Reports by the Office of High Commissioner testify to the litany of India's systematic suppression of Kashmiri rights. The UN Special Procedures and independent civil society and media have also documented these serious abuses.

I, therefore, call on States that place premium on universal respect for human rights to demonstrate consistency and speak out for the protection of the rights of the Kashmiris in the IIOJK. I also urge the High Commissioner to present an updated

report and apprise this Council about the grave human rights situation in the occupied territory.

**Mr. President,**

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the recent intentional burning of the Holy Quran in three countries by individuals masquerading as paragons of free speech.

Willfully desecrating Holy Books, religious symbols, and revered personalities is neither a right nor a freedom. Those, who thrive on economies of hate, entitle themselves neither to freedom nor favor.

We agree with the High Commissioner that free speech is not a free pass, as its exercise carries with it certain duties and responsibilities. We, therefore, call on all governments to prevent such senseless acts, evolve legal deterrence against incitement to violence, and hold violators to account under due process of law.

In the last two decades, Islamophobia continues to grow in large part due to securitization of policies and stereotyping by sections of media. It is time to confront the underlying drivers and actors fanning deliberate hate and incitement to violence.

**Mr. President,**

In a world beset with conflict and crises, we must renew our resolve to protect, uplift and empower the marginalized and the underprivileged. This is the pressing need of the hour, especially of the developing countries. The human rights imperative for collective action and support is crystal-clear.

In this regard:

- i. The international financial institutions must undertake special measures to support developing countries in protecting basic rights to food, livelihood, and a decent living.
- ii. Cross-cutting issues of climate change, underdevelopment, global finance, and inequalities need to be viewed from a human rights lens. We cannot afford to deal with them in isolation anymore; and
- iii. Meaningful assistance from the international human rights machinery is needed by developing countries in fulfilling basic human rights and development needs of their citizens.

To achieve these objectives, let us join hands, rekindle the spirit of UDHR and pursue human rights in an apolitical manner.

**Thank you.**