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**PROCEDURES SPECIALES DU**  
**CONSEIL DES DROITS DE L'HOMME**

**UNITED NATIONS**  
**OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS**  
**HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

**SPECIAL PROCEDURES OF THE**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the Independent Expert on minority issues**

REFERENCE: AL G/SO 214 (56-23) Minorities (2005-4)  
PAK 9/2011

31 October 2011

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and Independent Expert on minority issues pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251 and to Human Rights Council resolutions 14/11 and 16/6.

In this connection, we would like to bring to your Excellency's Government's attention information we have received regarding the kidnapping of Mr. **Shahbaz Taseer** on 26 August 2011, and the harassment and threats received by his sister Ms. **Shehar Bano Taseer**, both are children of the late Governor of Punjab, Mr. Salman Taseer, murdered on 4 January 2011.

According to the information received:

On 26 August 2011, at approximately 9:30 a.m., Mr. Shahbaz Taseer left his residence for his office with a friend. Mr. Shahbaz Taseer was reportedly not accompanied by police protection on this day. While on his way to work, two persons riding motorbikes and a further two driving a black car are reported to have blocked the vehicle of Mr. Shahbaz Taseer. Reportedly, Mr. Shahbaz Taseer was forced out of his car, and driven away in a black car. Mr. Shahbaz Taseer's friend was left on the road. Furthermore, the group responsible for the kidnapping is alleged to be "Tehrik -e-Taliban Pakistan".

Moreover, Ms. Shehar Bano Taseer, sister of the missing Mr. Shahbaz Taseer, is reported to have received death threats by members of religious parties, to withdraw the case against Mr. Mumtaz Qadri, who is allegedly responsible for the murder of her father, or to accept compensation ("diyat").

Both Ms. Shehar Bano Taseer and Mr. Shahbaz Taseer are reported to have been targeted due to their father seeking reform of the blasphemy provisions in Pakistan (please refer to the Special Procedures' communications sent on 24

January 2011, and 30 May 2011, A/HRC/18/51). On 2 March 2011, Pakistani Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian member of Pakistan's Cabinet, was shot dead by gunmen who ambushed his car in Islamabad due to his calls for reform of blasphemy laws. The Independent Expert on minority issues, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions issued a press statement condemning this killing and urging protection of minorities in law and in practice.

In view of the above, grave concern is expressed for the safety of Mr. Shahbaz Taseer and Ms. Shehar Bano Taseer as well as the security of other individuals belonging to the Christian minority in Pakistan and those critical of Pakistan's blasphemy law, who may face threats or violence.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we wish to appeal to your Excellency's Government to seek clarification of the circumstances regarding the abovementioned events.

We would also like to recall the rights of the above-mentioned individuals to freedom of religion or belief, in accordance with articles 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). We would like to also recall the relevant human rights obligations that your Excellency's Government has undertaken. In particular, we wish to refer to the ICCPR, which Pakistan has ratified on 23 June 2010. With regard to the alleged death threats, we would like to remind your Excellency's Government that, according to article 20, paragraph 2, of the ICCPR (to which Pakistan has no made reservation), "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law".

The General Assembly, in its resolution 65/211, urges States to step up their efforts to protect and promote freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, and to this end "(j) To take all necessary and appropriate action, in conformity with international standards of human rights, to combat hatred, discrimination, intolerance and acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by intolerance based on religion or belief, as well as incitement to hostility and violence, with particular regard to members of religious minorities in all parts of the world; (k) To promote, through the education system and other means, mutual understanding, tolerance, non-discrimination and respect in all matters relating to freedom of religion or belief by encouraging, in the society at large, a wider knowledge of different religions and beliefs and of the history, traditions, languages and cultures of the various religious minorities existing within their jurisdiction; (l) To prevent any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief that impairs the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis and to detect signs of intolerance that may lead to discrimination based on religion or belief".

We wish to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to international standards relevant to the protection and promotion of the rights of minorities. Article 27 of the ICCPR establishes that: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language." In addition, the provisions of the 1992 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities require under article 1.1 that "States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity." In addition, article 4.1 of the Declaration establishes that: "States shall take measures where required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law." We wish to emphasize that the obligation on States to protect the existence of minorities requires governments to protect persons belonging to minorities from acts of violence against them and to strongly condemn such actions. Moreover, governments must be committed to finding ways to create safe environments for all, including by carefully monitoring and strengthening their own anti-discrimination activities, through leadership and public education, and by prosecuting the discriminatory and violent actions of others in society. They should swiftly denounce hate speech or incitement to hatred that might be used by anyone in society.

Moreover, it is our responsibility under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention. Since we are expected to report on these cases to the Human Rights Council, we would be grateful for your cooperation and your observations on the following matters:

1. Are the facts alleged in the above summary of the cases accurate?
2. Has a complaint been lodged with regard to the incidents mentioned?
3. Please provide the details and where available, the results, of any judicial investigation, or any criminal charges and other inquiries carried out in relation to the cases.
4. What specific measures are in place to ensure the security of persons belonging to the Christian minority as well as those who may face threats and violence on the basis of their advocating for reform of Pakistan's blasphemy law.

We undertake to ensure that your Excellency's Government's response to each of these questions is accurately reflected in the report we will submit to the Human Rights Council for its consideration.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Heiner Bielefeldt  
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

IZSÁK Rita  
Independent Expert on minority issues