

Mandates of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Ref.: UA PAK 6/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

9 May 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism and Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 50/18, 54/14, 50/17, 52/4, 52/5, 58/14 and 52/7.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the arrest, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and mistreatment of leaders and members of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) since March 2025, including Ms. Mahrang Baloch, Ms. Beebow Baloch, Ms. Gulzadi Baloch, Mr. Sibghatullah Shahjee, and Mr. Bebag Baloch.**

We would like to remind your Excellency's Government of communication [PAK 6/2024](#), in which several Special Procedures mandate-holders expressed serious concern about the acts of intimidation and harassment, including through arbitrary travel restrictions and the filing of allegedly baseless criminal charges, against Ms. Mahrang Baloch. This communication echoed the concerns raised by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders in a prior communication ([PAK 4/2024](#)). Additionally, Special Procedures mandate-holders have recently raised concerns over a series of acts and measures reportedly undertaken within the context of counter-terrorism operations in the province of Balochistan in [PAK 1/2025](#), including against the BYC, and issued several press releases.¹ We note with regret that the Government has not yet provided a response to these communications.

According to the information received:

Two women human rights defenders, Ms. Mahrang Baloch and Ms. Beebow Baloch, were reportedly arrested on 22 March 2025 during a peaceful sit-in in Quetta, Balochistan, protesting the alleged arbitrary arrest and enforced

¹ [Pakistan: UN experts demand release of Baloch human rights defenders, and an end to crackdown on peaceful protest | OHCHR](#), 26 March 2025.
[UN experts urge Pakistan to address human rights violations in Balochistan | OHCHR](#), 29 April 2025.

disappearance of Baloch human rights defenders, including BYC leader Mr. Bebarg Baloch and his family members. Mr. Bebarg Baloch and his family members were reportedly arbitrarily arrested and forcibly disappeared a few days prior, and later found to be held in Hudda Prison.

On 22 March 2025, at around 5:30 a.m., police officers reportedly disrupted the peaceful sit-in using tear gas, water cannons and blank shots to disperse the demonstrators, killing three protestors. Shortly thereafter, Ms. Mahrang Baloch, Ms. Beebow Baloch and several other protestors were detained under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance (MPO) at Hudda Prison. Ms. Beebow Baloch and Ms. Mahrang Baloch have remained imprisoned since then, despite the elapsing of the initial 30-day detention period under the MPO. Reportedly, authorities have extended their period of detention without a fair hearing.

Another BYC leader, Mr. Sibghatullah Shahjee, was arrested from his residence in Quetta on 31 March 2025. He was also detained under Section 3 of the MPO and is held in Hudda Prison. Furthermore, Ms. Gulzadi Baloch, a woman human rights defender and BYC member, was reportedly arrested on 7 April 2025 in Quetta, with excessive force being used during the arrest. For several hours her whereabouts remained unknown, causing serious concerns for her physical and mental safety. It later became known that she is also held at the Hudda Prison under the MPO.

On 5 April 2025, authorities reportedly arrested Ms. Beebow Baloch's father, Mr. Ghaffar Qambarani, without any legal basis, reportedly in reprisal for his daughter's human rights work. He is also currently detained at Hudda Prison under the MPO.

Mistreatment in prison, forcible transfer and enforced disappearance of Ms. Beebow Baloch

Reportedly, on 23 April 2025, a large contingent of Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) officers entered Hudda Prison and forcibly removed woman human rights defender Ms. Beebow Baloch. It is alleged that Ms. Beebow Baloch was beaten and dragged before being forcibly removed by security forces to Pishin Prison, a men's prison located 50 km away from Quetta, without any notification to her lawyer or family. Two women human rights defenders, Ms. Mahrang Baloch and Ms. Gulzadi Baloch, were also reportedly beaten by officers during the incident. It is reported that for several hours after her removal from Hudda Prison, there was no information about Ms. Beebow Baloch's whereabouts. Prison authorities provided conflicting information regarding her place of detention and denied access to her family or lawyers. It was subsequently confirmed that she had been transferred to Pishin Prison.

During her imprisonment in Pishin Prison, Ms. Beebow Baloch was on a hunger strike, and her health condition deteriorated severely. On 3 May 2025, she was reportedly assaulted inside the Pishin Prison. After this incident, she was moved to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Quetta and later transferred back to Hudda Prison where she remains imprisoned.

It is reported that Ms. Mahrang Baloch, Mr. Sibghatullah Shahjee, Mr. Bebag Baloch and fellow detained BYC members began a hunger strike on 25 April 2025 to protest Ms. Beebow Baloch's transfer and the mistreatment they faced in prison. As a result, their health has rapidly deteriorated while access to medical care remains severely restricted. In particular, Mr. Bebag Baloch, who was reportedly already paralyzed before his arrest, has experienced severe medical deterioration risking long-term damage and life-threatening complications.

Additionally, Ms. Mahrang Baloch has reportedly faced repeated attempts from authorities to coerce her into signing a document agreeing to her own house arrest. After her repeated refusals to sign the agreement, she has reportedly been facing various retaliatory measures, including solitary confinement and separation from other inmates; attempts to separate her from fellow detainees; and restricted access to her lawyer and family members. At the same time, her family members appear to be facing reprisals for their support. According to information received, in August 2024, her brother Nasir Ghaffar was placed on the Fourth Schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act, a list of "proscribed persons", allowing the government to impose significant restrictions on his rights. Meanwhile, her sister Nadia Ghaffar has found that her access to her bank account has been blocked since April 2025, an indication that her national identity card has been suspended and that she may have been placed on the Fourth Schedule. Both siblings believe that these actions were taken to exert pressure on Ms. Mahrang Baloch.

It is further reported that Mr. Israr Baloch, a lawyer representing detained BYC activists, has been subjected to ongoing harassment by law enforcement agencies. On 17 April 2025, masked individuals forcibly entered his house and raided it, confiscating some books and discarding others, and harassed his family members, repeatedly inquiring about Mr. Israr Baloch. Reportedly, Mr. Israr Baloch and his family have been subjected to such harassment in retaliation for his advocacy for human rights as well as for providing legal support to BYC activists.

Without prejudging the accuracy of the aforementioned allegations, we express serious concern at the prolonged unlawful detention, torture and/or ill-treatment, and enforced disappearance of BYC leaders and members, as well as their family members, in reprisal for their human rights advocacy and peaceful protests. We express further concern about Ms. Beebow Baloch's 10-day transfer to a men's prison facility and the continuing risk that other women human rights defenders (WHRDs) may face the same. Additionally, we remain troubled by the deteriorating health conditions faced by BYC members who have been on a hunger strike and their lack of access to timely medical care, infringing on their right to health under article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified by Pakistan on 17 April 2008), humane conditions of detention under article 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified by Pakistan on 23 June 2010), the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), and potentially infringing on their right to life under article 6 of the ICCPR.

We would like to remind your Excellency's Government that the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including the requirement of humane and dignified treatment in detention, set forth, *inter alia*, in article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR, and articles 1, 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), ratified by Pakistan on 23 June 2010, is absolute and non-derogable. We stress that, attached to such prohibition are obligations to criminalize and investigate all acts of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, to prosecute suspects, punish those responsible and provide remedies to victims. Such investigations should be prompt, independent, transparent, and impartial wherever there is a "reasonable ground" to believe that an act of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment has been committed, even in the absence of a formal complaint. Persons making complaints must likewise be protected from intimidation or other risks to their personal integrity or safety. It is further prohibited to use any form of intimidation or pressure to coerce a person to confess or provide information against their will, and such information or confession shall not be admitted into any proceedings except in those that seek to establish whether torture or another form of ill-treatment has been committed. We refer your Excellency's Government to the report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/52/30), which sets out States' obligations, including under customary and treaty international laws, to investigate all allegations of torture or similar mistreatment and to protect the rights of victims.

Persons deprived of liberty must always be treated in a humane manner and with respect for their inherent dignity. They shall always have access, *inter alia*, to effective legal representation and adequate medical assistance; prompt judicial review of their initial and continuing deprivation of liberty (ICCPR, article 9); remedies for any violations (ICCPR, article 2); and have the possibility to communicate with their relatives and to be visited by independent human rights monitoring bodies. We would also like to refer your Excellency's Government to the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Noncustodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) and particularly rule 1, which states that in order for the principle of non-discrimination embodied in rule 6 of the Nelson Mandela Rules to be put into practice, account shall be taken of the distinctive needs of women prisoners in the application of the Rules; and rule 11 which provides that male and female prisoners must be separated.

We also remind your Excellency's Government that States have a heightened duty of care to take any necessary measures to protect the lives of individuals deprived of their liberty by the State, since by arresting, detaining, imprisoning or otherwise depriving individuals of their liberty, States parties assume the responsibility to care for their lives (CCPR/C/GC/36). The duty to protect the life of all detained individuals includes providing them with the necessary medical care and appropriate regular monitoring of their health (*ibid*).

In relation to the hunger strikes in detention, we would like to recall that the best way to respond to these demonstrations is to address the underlying human rights violations that are the basis of the protest. Authorities have a duty to look for solutions to extreme situations created by a hunger strike, including through good faith dialogue

about the grievances, and always respecting the rights of those who use this form of protest.

We would also like to remind your Excellency's Government that article 9 of the ICCPR guarantees the right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention, and that the prohibition of arbitrary detention is absolute. We also recall that the arrest or detention of an individual as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights guaranteed by the ICCPR, including the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including artistic expression (article 19), the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly (article 21), and of association (article 22) is arbitrary (see CCPR/C/GC/35, para. 17 and the jurisprudence of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention). In addition, as reiterated by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, a deprivation of liberty is arbitrary when it constitutes a violation of international law on the grounds of discrimination, including discrimination based on gender or political or other opinion. We also recall the applicable provisions of the ICCPR in cases of enforced disappearances, including arts. 6, 7, 9, 10 and 16, read alone and in conjunction with art. 2.3 (regarding the disappeared person), and art. 7, read alone and in conjunction with art. 2.3, regarding the family members.

Under international law, the failure or refusal to acknowledge a deprivation of liberty by State agents or persons or groups of persons acting with their authorization, support, and acquiescence, constitutes enforced disappearance, irrespective of the duration of the deprivation of liberty or the type of concealment concerned.² State authorities are thus obliged to take all necessary measures to effectively protect the rights of the persons deprived of their liberty, as they automatically assume responsibility for their lives, physical integrity and wellbeing.

In this respect, we refer to the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances which establishes that no State shall practice, permit or tolerate enforced disappearances. The Declaration also proclaims that each State shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent and terminate acts of enforced disappearance in any territory under its jurisdiction. We recall that the Declaration sets out the necessary protection to be ensured by States regarding all persons deprived of liberty. Furthermore, article 13 of the Declaration provides that states shall take steps to ensure that all involved in the investigation, including the complainant, counsel, witnesses and those conducting the investigation, are protected against ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal and, that such acts or any other form of interference on the occasion of the lodging of a complaint or during the investigation procedure is appropriately punished. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances further elaborates on the additional and gendered risks faced by women and human rights defenders in its general comment on women affected by enforced disappearances (A/HRC/WGEID/98/2), and its study on enforced disappearance and economic, social and cultural rights (A/HRC/30/38/Add.5).

We would also like to remind your Excellency's Government that the absolute prohibition of enforced disappearances and the corresponding obligation to investigate them have attained the status of *jus cogens*. We emphasize that in accordance with the jurisprudence of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, enforced disappearances

² [Joint statement on so-called "short-term enforced disappearances"](#)

constitute an aggravated form of arbitrary detention.

Furthermore, we wish to recall article 3 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which states that women have a right to life, liberty, equality and freedom from being subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment. The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, in its 2019 thematic report (A/HRC/41/33), also noted that not only the causes but also the consequences of deprivation of liberty are gendered, and women and girls experience their confinement in specific ways and are often at risk of heightened gender-based discrimination, stigma and violence. Moreover, measures to combat terrorism and national security measures sometimes profile and target women, in particular those from certain groups, and sometimes even women human rights defenders. The Working Group has recommended States to ensure that measures addressing conflict, crisis, terrorism, and national security incorporate a women's human rights focus and do not instrumentalize women's deprivation of liberty for the purposes of pursuing government aims.

Additionally, women human rights defenders warrant protection under the General Assembly resolution 68/181, which was adopted on 18 December 2013. The resolution requires States to publicly acknowledge the importance of women human rights defenders and take practical steps to prevent threats, harassment, and violence against them. States must also combat impunity for such violations and abuses, and ensure that all legal provisions, administrative measures and policies affecting these defenders are compatible with relevant provisions of international human rights law.

We also wish to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government AL PAK 1/2025, in which Special Procedures mandate holders expressed concern at, *inter alia*, the misuse of certain administrative and legal counter-terrorism measures against Baloch activists and organizations, the impacts of counter-terrorism measures on fundamental rights and freedoms, the vague and overly broad definition of terrorism under the 1997 Anti Terrorism Act, and the incompatibility with international human rights standards of the listing/delisting of individuals on a "proscribed persons" list under the Fourth Schedule of the Anti Terrorism Act. We refer your Excellency's Government to the extensive analysis provided by the mandate holders in this letter and recall once again that counter-terrorism laws should not be misused against individuals peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

Finally, we draw your attention to the active engagement of some BYC members, including Ms. Mahrang Baloch, in protecting the human rights of the Baloch minority in Pakistan and their engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, including Special Procedures. In this regard, we note that Human Rights Council resolutions 12/2, 24/24, 36/21, 42/28, 48/15, and 54/24 reaffirm the right to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies, particularly the UN. These resolutions urge States to refrain from acts of intimidation or reprisals and to take measures to prevent such acts. We respectfully request your Excellency's Government to ensure that BYC members, including Ms. Mahrang Baloch, can continue their legitimate activities without hindrance, including their engagement with the UN.

We are also alarmed at the allegations of harassment against Mr. Israr Baloch and his family in retaliation for his advocacy work and for providing legal support to BYC members. We recall that article 14 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to a fair trial,

including the right to legal representation. This right is fundamental to the rule of law, human rights protection, and an independent judiciary, as it ensures access to justice, checks state power, and upholds due process guarantees for all. The United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, adopted at the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Havana, Cuba, from 27 August to 7 September 1990, establish an obligation for States to take all appropriate measures to ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment, or improper interference, and that they shall not suffer, nor be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic, or other sanctions for actions taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards, and ethics (principle 16). We recall that the free exercise of the legal profession helps ensure access to justice, oversight of state power, protection of due process and judicial guarantees. Principle 23 further affirms that “[l]awyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly”.

The full texts of the human rights instruments and standards recalled above are available on www.ohchr.org or can be provided upon request.

In view of the urgency of the matter, we would appreciate a response as soon as possible on the initial steps taken by your Excellency’s Government to safeguard the rights of the above-mentioned person(s) in compliance with international instruments.

As 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, we would also be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide the factual and legal grounds for the arrest and subsequent detention of Ms. Mahrang Baloch, Ms. Beebow Baloch, Ms. Gulzadi Baloch, Mr. Sibghatullah Shahjee, and Mr. Bebag Baloch, and explain how this detention is in compliance with international human rights and standards.
3. Please provide information on measures adopted to ensure that Ms. Mahrang Baloch, Ms. Beebow Baloch, Ms. Gulzadi Baloch, Mr. Sibghatullah Shahjee, and Mr. Bebag Baloch are treated humanely, are provided with access to their families and to lawyers of their choosing, are not pressured to sign agreements against their will, and have prompt access to adequate medical care, with regard to their specific vulnerabilities related to age, gender, health condition, and, where applicable, disabilities.
4. Please provide detailed information on the legal and factual grounds for the 10-day transfer of Ms. Beebow Baloch to Pishin Prison, without notification to her lawyer or family members, and what safeguards are in place to ensure that women human rights defenders are not transferred to a men’s prison. Please explain how the transfer of Ms. Beebow Baloch to a men’s facility complies with the requirement that male and female

prisoners be separated under the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

5. Please explain what immediate measures have been taken to ensure the physical and psychological integrity of imprisoned BYC leaders and members who have been conducting a hunger strike, including their access to medical care and, where appropriate, hospitalization.
6. Please explain which remedies are available to the aforementioned BYC leaders and members for challenging legality of their conditions of detention and the lack of medical assistance provided to them, in compliance with international human rights law.
7. Please provide information as to what measures have been taken to safeguard the due process and fair trial rights of the aforementioned BYC leaders and members, and how such measures are in compliance with the obligations of your Excellency's Government under international human rights law.
8. Please provide detailed information on the measures which have been taken, or which are foreseen, to ensure full and impartial investigations, independent medical examinations, and judicial or other inquiries in relation to the allegations of arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. If measures have been undertaken, please make available the results of the investigations. If no such measure has been taken, please explain how this is compatible with the international human rights obligations of Pakistan. Please also provide information on the measures that have been taken to protect complainants from any form of intimidation or harassment or other violations for having made such allegations.
9. Please explain what measures your Excellency's Government has implemented to ensure that the living conditions of prisoners comply with international standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules), and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules).
10. Please provide detailed information concerning measures taken to implement the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2022. Please provide information about the number of complaints received and investigations opened and resolved concerning torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the outcomes of those cases. Please provide information about steps taken to ensure the legal, procedural and practical application by judges, lawyers, forensic specialists, and experts of the United Nations Manual on the Documentation and Investigation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol,

revised version 2022).

11. Please provide information about measures taken to ensure that human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, in Pakistan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights work, including through engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, in an enabling environment, free from intimidation, reprisals or violations of any kind.
12. Please provide details on the safeguards in place to ensure that lawyers in Pakistan, including Mr. Israr Baloch, are able to perform all of their professional functions as well as to exercise their right to freedom of expression without intimidation, hindrance, harassment, or improper interference, in conformity with international standards.
13. Please provide detailed information on the measures being undertaken to reform Pakistan's counter-terrorism laws to ensure full compliance with the principle of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination as required under international human rights standards and as set out in previous communications (see AL PAK 1/2025). In particular, please explain how these reforms will address concerns about overly broad definitions and the potential misapplication of such laws to activities that do not constitute genuine acts of terrorism.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to prevent any irreparable harm to the life and personal integrity of the aforementioned BYC leaders and members, to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and, in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person responsible.

The concerns expressed in this letter warrant in our view immediate attention on the part of the Government to protect the rights of the aforementioned BYC leaders and members and prevent the recurrence of further violations.

Further, we would like to inform your Excellency's Government that having transmitted an urgent appeal to the Government, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention may also transmit the case through its regular procedure in order to render an opinion on whether the deprivation of liberty was arbitrary or not. The present communication in no way prejudices any opinion the Working Group may render. The Government is required to respond separately to this urgent appeal and the regular procedure.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release would be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that this is a matter

of public interest, and that the wider public should be alerted to the human rights implications of these allegations. The press release would indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

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

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Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

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Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Gina Romero

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Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Nicolas Levrat

Special Rapporteur on minority issues

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Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Alice Jill Edwards

Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment