

**Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

Ref.: AL PAK 16/2025

(Please use this reference in your reply)

10 December 2025

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 52/7.

In this connection, I would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information I have received concerning Mr. Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi, who is being detained in Adiala Jail, in Rawalpindi since September 2023, and allegedly held in conditions of detention that are considered to fall below international standards on humane and dignified treatment in detention, in particular allegations that he has been held in lengthy periods of solitary confinement.

On 25 March 2024, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) adopted Opinion No. 22/2024, which is deemed to be referred to in full herein, finding that the deprivation of liberty of Mr. Khan was arbitrary.<sup>1</sup> I write only with respect to the conditions of his detention, and refer your Excellency's Government to the WGAD's Opinion on the question of the legality of his detention.

According to the information received:

Mr. Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi is the founder and Chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Pakistan Justice Movement, "PTI"). From August 2018 to April 2022, he was the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Mr. Khan is known to have been an outspoken critic of corruption in Pakistan, and to have spoken of the dangers of unconstitutional overreach of power in the Pakistani military. According to some views and owing to these activities, on 10 April 2022, he was removed from office following a no-confidence vote in the National Assembly.

Subsequently, Mr. Khan was arrested on multiple occasions, including on 8 May 2023, by the National Accountability Bureau ("NAB"); on 5 August 2023, by the Punjab police, and placed under house arrest; and on 15 August 2023, when he was placed in detention at Attock Jail.

According to reports, while in Attock Jail, Mr. Khan was held in a small, dirty and dark cell with an open washroom without a shower, placed under camera surveillance. He had no privacy while bathing or using the toilet. The cell was infested with flies during the day and insects at night. After a rainstorm blew off the roof, it was left unrepaired, exposing Mr. Khan to rain, sun and swarms of flies. For one week, he had to sleep on a concrete bench, as he was not provided with a mattress. Mr. Khan was also allegedly denied access to his legal counsel,

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<sup>1</sup> See [A/HRC/WGAD/2024/22](https://www.hrc.org/en/docs/default-source/wgad/2024/22)

doctors and family members.

In August 2023, Mr. Khan filed a petition challenging the lawfulness of his detention alleging that the detention conditions imposed on him were due to political pressure and were intended to psychologically torture him. On 26 September 2023, Mr. Khan was transferred to Adiala Jail, in Rawalpindi, where he is currently being held.

In Adiala Jail, Mr. Khan is reportedly placed in a cell measuring 1.8 m x 2.4 m (equating to 4.32 m<sup>2</sup>), which is above the minimum requirement of 3.4 m<sup>2</sup> per person set by the International Committee of the Red Cross,<sup>2</sup> but considerably less as a single room standard specified by the Council of Europe of 6 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>3</sup> Information provided indicates his cell is equipped with a simple cot with a mattress, a small table and chair, and a makeshift open washroom area. The cell is monitored by surveillance cameras 24 hours a day. The toilet is partially enclosed by a 1.2 m high wall and has no roof or door.

There are no windows or sources of natural light and ventilation; while artificial lighting is insufficient. As the cell is unheated, it is extremely cold during the Winter period, while during the summer it was extremely hot. The stagnant air often develops a bad smell and insect infestations, as there is no proper airflow or climate control. As a result, Mr. Khan reportedly suffered nausea and apparent weight loss, particularly during days of extreme heat. Owing to inadequate food and filthy water, he also suffered severe vomiting.

It is reported that Mr. Khan remains in solitary confinement, kept in his cell for at least 23 hours a day, with almost no access to the outside world except for when he is taken out to attend court hearings, or since October 2025 for irregular family visits. He is not permitted any outdoor times for fresh air or outdoor exercise, and while he may do some light exercises alone in his cell, he is not permitted to interact with any other prisoner. Mr. Khan has not been allowed to join communal prayers, or Eid prayers. He is allegedly forced to pray alone in his cell, and, when he does that, he is under surveillance. Furthermore, prison officers and staff often speak to him in a threatening or highly disrespectful manner reportedly to intimidate or demoralize him.

During the initial period of detention at Adiala Jail, Mr. Khan was not permitted to receive visits. In late October 2024, pursuant to an order issued by the Islamabad High Court, the ban on visits was lifted. Family members and lawyers met with Mr. Khan, for the first time, on 30 October 2024. The High Court order also instituted a medical board to examine Mr. Khan's health, and a medical examination was reportedly performed in November 2024. No newer information is available.

While the prohibition on visits was removed, access to Mr. Khan remains heavily restricted with the authorities routinely interrupting or preventing

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<sup>2</sup> ICRC, *Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Habitat in Prisons: Supplementary Guidance* (2012), p. 33: <https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/external/doc/en/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-4083.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Europe, "Living space per prisoner in prison establishments: CPT standards", 15 December 2015.

scheduled visits from lawyers, family or friends. For example, although the Islamabad High Court set specific visiting days (every Tuesday for lawyers and family, and Thursdays for friends), local police and prison officials reportedly frequently block the roads to the prison and refuse entry to those wanting to visit Mr. Khan.

When visits take place, Mr. Khan meets with a limited number of people (often only 1 or 2 from an approved list) in a congested, monitored room (outfitted with CCTV surveillance and listening devices), with prison staff observing and even interrupting conversations. There is no privacy for discussions (even with lawyers), and visits are often cut short before the allotted time expires.

Mr. Khan is also not able to send or receive letters freely. All communication channels are reported to be controlled. Access to news and reading material has been sporadic and heavily restricted. For instance, when newspapers or books are brought for Mr. Khan by his family or friends, prison officials frequently refuse to deliver them to him. On occasions, when he is given access to television, he is only permitted to watch the State-run channel, while international or other news channels being blocked. Mr. Khan's access to information to current events, as well as educational or religious texts, and other mental stimulation is therefore limited.

While Mr. Khan's overall health is reported to be presently good, Mr. Khan is 72 years old and has a history of medical issues, including a severe spinal injury from an accident in 2013, and bullet wounds from an assassination attempt in 2022. He has allegedly been consistently denied access to adequate medical care. While he was examined by government-appointed doctors (whose neutrality, quality, and impartiality are questioned) for dental issues, shoulder pain, tinnitus, hearing loss, vertigo, and gastrointestinal concerns, he could not consult with his personal physicians an/or independent specialists. On various occasions, Mr. Khan's doctors (and other specialists, including some traveling from Lahore) arrived at the prison to visit him but were turned away by officials.

It has been asserted that certain conditions of detention are specifically imposed to exert physical and psychological pressure on Mr. Khan in order to silence his criticism of Pakistan's military and government. He has described the cumulative effect of the above circumstances as "mental torture". It is feared that if the present circumstances are not remedied, he may suffer serious and irreversible harm to his health and well-being.

While I do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, I express my concerns at the conditions of detention in which Mr. Khan is currently held and their cumulative effects on his physical and mental well-being. Should the reported circumstances be established, they could amount to a violation of Mr. Khan's right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including the requirement of humane and dignified treatment in detention, protected by article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); articles 7 and 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Pakistan in 2010; and, at least, articles 1, 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), also ratified by Pakistan in 2010. I

emphasize that the prohibition of torture is absolute and non-derogable and is a *jus cogens* norm of international law; and that all detainees shall be treated with dignity and humanity and without prejudice to their political or other views.

Furthermore, Mr. Khan's lengthy periods of solitary confinement, in Adiala Jail, would constitute prolonged solitary confinement, which is prohibited under international human rights law (including UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the "Nelson Mandela Rules", rule 43). Prolonged solitary confinement is defined as confinement of prisoners for longer than 22 hours per day without meaningful human contact (rule 44). Prolonged solitary confinement, which is prohibited as a form of torture, is understood to be isolation that exceeds 15 consecutive days (rule 44). Long term solitary confinement can cause very serious and irreparable harm to individuals. For this reason, solitary confinement shall be used only in exceptional cases and for appropriate reasons, as a last resort, for as short a time as possible and subject to independent review, and only pursuant to the authorization by a competent authority. It shall not be imposed by virtue of a prisoner's sentence (rule 45).

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; remedies for any violations; and have the possibility to communicate with a lawyer of choice, their relatives and to be visited by independent human rights monitoring bodies. Persons deprived of liberty also have the right to be informed at the time of arrest of the reasons for their arrest, and subsequently of any charges brought against them. If not promptly charged or convicted of any crime, they should be released.

All accommodation provided for the use of prisoners and in particular all sleeping accommodation shall meet all requirements of health, due regard being paid to climatic conditions and particularly to cubic content of air, minimum floor space, lighting, heating and ventilation (Mandela Rules, rule 13, also rule 19).

Furthermore, the above-mentioned allegations may contravene Mr. Khan's right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, recognized in article 25 of the UDHR and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by Pakistan in 2008; and the requirement in the Mandela Rules of equivalence of care for those detained as provided to those in the community (rule 24).

With this in mind, I call on the Government of Pakistan to ensure that, while deprived of liberty, Mr. Khan is treated in a dignified and humane manner at all times. In particular Mr. Khan's isolation and solitary confinement must end and he must be provided access to the aforementioned rights.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is my responsibility, under the mandate provided to me by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to my attention, I would be grateful

for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide updated and detailed information on measures taken to fulfil the requirements of humane and dignified treatment in line with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR, and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules). Please report on concrete measures taken to adjust Mr. Khan's conditions to adhere strictly to these standards.
3. Please provide updated and detailed information on the present state of physical and mental health of Mr. Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi and the measures taken, or envisaged to be adopted, to ensure timely access to adequate medical care.
4. Please provide details regarding implementation of the Islamabad High Court's order of October 2025 that requires the Adiala Jail to implement the visit schedule of March 2025.

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, I urge that all necessary interim measures be taken 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 for the alleged violations.

I may publicly express my concerns in the near future as, in my view, the information provided to me is in the public interest and is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. The press release will indicate that I have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

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

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

## **Annex**

### **Reference to international human rights law**

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, the Government is referred to:

- the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including obligations arising from the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (articles 1, 2 and 16), and articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR.
- The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (“Nelson Mandela Rules”) which provide for appropriate accommodation, including minimum cubic content of air and floor space, lighting and ventilation (rules 12 to 17), requirements to be met regarding personal hygiene (rule 18), clothing and bedding (rules 19 to 21), food (rule 22) and exercise and sport (rule 23).
- Rule 58 that provides that prisoners shall be allowed, under necessary supervision, to communicate with their family and friends at regular intervals by corresponding or by receiving visits.
- The Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1988.
- The Committee against Torture and the Human Rights Committee’s views that have consistently found that conditions of detention can amount to inhuman and degrading treatment.

In addition, the Government is referred to articles 2.2 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes an obligation on the part of all States parties to, inter alia, refrain from denying or limiting equal access for all persons, including prisoners or detainees, to medical care (general comment 14 of the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural rights, para 34); and rules 24 to 35 of the Nelson Mandela Rules that establish that healthcare for prisoners is a State responsibility; prisoners should be ensured prompt access to medical attention in urgent cases and those requiring specialized treatment or surgery shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals.