

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

Ref.: AL PAK 15/2025

(Please use this reference in your reply)

16 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 Mrs. Bushra Bibi Khan, presently being detained in Adiala Jail, in Rawalpindi, and allegedly held in conditions of detention that are considered to fall below international standards on humane and dignified treatment in detention. I am concerned about her overall health, which is reported to be in serious decline.

According to the information received:

Mrs. Bushra Bibi Khan is the wife of Mr. Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi, Prime Minister of Pakistan from 2018 to 2022. She is an influential advisor to her husband, and is known as a public figure engaged in humanitarian work.

On 27 January 2024, Mrs. Bibi Khan was arrested, for the first time, convicted and sentenced to 14-years' imprisonment. She was confined to Bani Gala (residence of former Prime Minister Khan in Islamabad), which was declared a "sub-jail."

While in custody at the "sub-jail", it is alleged that officials contaminated her food with a caustic chemical, causing her serious internal injuries. In April 2024, Mrs. Khan was taken to Shifa International Hospital to undergo medical tests and treatment. During an endoscopy, a doctor reportedly witnessed wounds in her stomach and oesophagus. However, the final medical report did not include these findings, and the endoscopy video was not provided to Mrs. Bibi Khan's family or to her lawyers, despite repeated requests.

In May 2024, Mrs. Bibi Khan was transferred to Adiala Jail, in Rawalpindi. She was released on bail in October 2024.

In December 2024, Mrs. Bibi Khan was arrested a second time for partaking in and leading protests demanding her husband's release.

At present, Mrs. Bibi Khan is held in Adiala Jail, facing a cumulative prison sentence of 21 years on multiple convictions, including charges against both her and her husband that they remarried before the completion of the *iddat* (waiting) period after divorce.

Mrs. Bibi Khan's cell is reportedly small, dirty and stifling hot, infested with rats and insects, with poor ventilation and frequent deliberate power cuts that leave her in darkness and extreme heat (often above 45°C). The water she is given is allegedly filthy, and she has complained that her meals are intentionally tainted with unbearably excessive chili powder, making the food inedible.

As a result, Mrs. Bibi Khan has reportedly suffered chemical burns to her throat and stomach, skin and insect-bite infections, and a severe tooth abscess. She has fainted, on occasions, from the overwhelming heat and her untreated ailments. Since her initial arrest in January 2024, she has lost approximately 15 kg. She has reportedly not received adequate medical care for these conditions.

Mrs. Bibi Khan is also frequently placed in prolonged solitary confinement for more than 22 hours a day, sometimes for periods exceeding ten days, with no possibility to exercise or to have meaningful human contact. During solitary confinement, she has had no access to her lawyers, family members, or personal doctors.

Mrs. Bibi Khan also has no access to any TV, books or newspapers and is cut off from the outside world.

It is submitted that Mrs. Bibi Khan's deprivation of liberty and the conditions in which she is being held are politically motivated, intended to increase pressure on her husband. Mrs. Bibi Khan's physical and mental health is reported to be rapidly deteriorating. It is feared that, should her current conditions of detention continue, she may suffer serious and irreversible harm.

While I do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, I wish to express serious concern about the conditions of detention in which Mrs. Bushra Bibi Khan is currently held. Should the reported circumstances be established, they could amount to a violation of Mrs. Bibi Khan's right to be free from torture or other cruel, 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.

I am particularly disturbed by the allegations about the contamination of her food and the serious health consequences she has suffered, and her overall deteriorating health. I remind the Government of Pakistan of her right to the enjoyment of 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 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the "Nelson Mandela Rules", of equivalence of care for those detained as provided to those in the community (rule 24). I also recall that the obligation to respect and ensure the right to life extends to reasonably foreseeable life-threatening

situations that can result in loss of life (article 3 UDHR and article 6 ICCPR).<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the repeated placement of Mrs. Bushra Bibi Khan in solitary confinement, without justification, is very concerning. Indefinite and prolonged solitary confinement are prohibited under international human rights law (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 with appropriate justification, 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).

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). Special considerations are also to be provided to women prisoners, pursuant to the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the "Bangkok Rules"), relevant here are those relating to conditions necessary for women to maintain personal hygiene including regular supply of clean water for bathing (rule 5), gender-specific health care equivalent to that received in the community (especially rules 10, 17 and 18), access to mental health care (rules 12 and 13), family visits (rule 26), and a balanced and comprehensive programme of activities (rule 42).

I further recall that 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.

I call on the Government of Pakistan to ensure that, while deprived of liberty, Mrs. Bushra Bibi Khan is treated in a dignified and humane manner at all times.

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:

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<sup>1</sup> See Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36, article 6, right to life (CCPR/C/GC/36): <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/GC/36>.

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 the present state of physical and mental health of Mrs. Bushra Bibi Khan. Please explain what measures have been taken, or may be envisaged to be adopted, to protect her life and preserve her health and well-being, including timely access to adequate medical care.
3. 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, articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR, and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules). Please explain what concrete measures taken to adjust Mrs. Khan's conditions to adhere strictly to those standards.

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 upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. I also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. 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’s 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.