



Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

International Federation
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional
de los Derechos Humanos

الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الإنسان

**Open letter to the EU
EU/Pakistan Summit: Major human rights concerns**

To:

The Foreign Ministers of Member States of the European Union

The High Representative of the European Union for the CFSP, Mr Javier Solana

The Commissioner for External Relations, Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner

Brussels-Paris-Lahore, 12 June 2009

On the occasion of the EU/Pakistan Summit, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) is writing to you to urge the European Union to address crucial human rights concerns. We believe that the issues of human rights respect in the framework of the fight against terrorism as well as death penalty should be part of the discussions on June 17.

Pakistan has been repeatedly hit by terrorist attacks, which have even increased in frequency during the past months. FIDH is aware that the fight against terrorist militant groups is a priority of the Zardari government. We believe that in this context, it is the duty of the EU to remind to the Pakistani authorities that this fight and any related security policy, to be efficient and legitimate, must be carried out in conformity with Pakistan's international human rights commitments, in particular the absolute prohibition of torture and enforced disappearances, as well as the right to a fair trial.

As demonstrated in a report published by FIDH in January 2009¹, enforced disappearances, torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, illegal detention and ill-treatment in prison are perpetrated on a daily basis by the army, the police, intelligence services, prisons and other state officials, under the so-called "war on terror".

Widespread violations of economic and social rights provide a fertile ground for strengthening terrorist militant groups and the adoption of strong measures to ensure the fulfilment of those rights must be a priority in the current context in Pakistan. We consider that the EU has an important role to play to contribute to such efforts, notably through its development cooperation with Pakistan.

¹ A long march for democracy and the rule of law, January 2009, accessible at <http://www.fidh.org/A-long-march-for-democracy-and-the>

FIDH echoes the call of its member organisation member in Pakistan, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) which requested the federal government to immediately set up a special task force to implement an urgent plan for extending relief to the large number of people displaced in the ongoing conflict in the country's northern part. In a statement released on May 8th, HRCP drew the attention to *"the plight of the people displaced from their homes in Swat, Dir and Buner as a result of militants' activities and the security forces' operations against them is getting more and more serious day by day. The number of these IDPs may soon touch the million mark. The circumstances in which these unfortunate people have been forced to abandon their homes have made it impossible for them to find succour on their own. Their needs for relief are both urgent and substantial"*.

As regards the death penalty, in July 2008, the Pakistani Federal Cabinet adopted a proposal to commute the death penalty to life imprisonment. This proposal, subjected to approval by the President before it enters into force, would benefit more than 7000 death row prisoners in Pakistan. Condemnations to death remain frequent and since the Prime Minister's announcement on the commutation of the death penalty, 16 persons have been executed. HRCP has recorded in total 36 executions in 2008. The most recent one dates back to May 2009. Unexpectedly the authorities added more offence to the already long list of capital crimes: offences were made punishable under the Prevention of electronic Crimes Ordinance. FIDH and HRCP published a report on the death penalty in Pakistan in 2007, which demonstrated the numerous violations of the fair trial standards².

FIDH urges the EU to raise its concern regarding the application of the death penalty in Pakistan, in conformity with the 1998 EU Guidelines on the death penalty. The EU should encourage the government of Pakistan to commute all death sentences to prison terms, and to take the initiative of a *de lege* moratorium on executions as a further step towards abolition.

We sincerely hope that the above mentioned issues will be on the agenda of the forthcoming EU/Pakistan Summit, which is in our view a unique occasion for the EU to address those concerns. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Souhayr Belhassen
FIDH President

⁻² Slow March to the gallows: death penalty in Pakistan, joint publication of HRCP and FIDH, January 2007, accessible at <http://www.fidh.org/Slow-march-to-the-gallows-Death>