



Media Update

13 May 2015

United Nations

PRESS STATEMENT

The United Nations in Pakistan condemns the attack on the Ismaili community in Karachi

The United Nations in Pakistan strongly condemns the attack carried out on the Ismaili community in Karachi which killed scores of people and wounded many more.

“We are horrified by this act of brutality and extend our condolences to the families of the deceased and the wounded. We express our deep concern about the repeated acts of blind violence against religious and ethnic minorities in Pakistan and reaffirm our strongest commitment to protecting the rights of all minorities for them to freely exercise their rights.” said Dr. Jacqui Badcock, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Pakistan.

The United Nations in Pakistan urges the Government to continue taking steps to build tolerance and strengthen relationships between diverse religious and ethnic communities in the country.

UN WOMEN

PRESS RELEASE

Pakistani youth propel the number of global HeForShe champions to over 300,000

Pakistan, 12 May 2015: In less than 48 hours, and with almost 5,000 online sign-ups from Pakistan alone, the HeForShe global ticker on Saturday crossed into the 300k mark.

Following a chance meeting of female students with Mr. Jamshed Kazi, Representative for UN Women Pakistan, on International Women's Day 2015 where he spoke of the HeForShe Campaign recently launched in Pakistan, the students jumped at the idea to create a movement among other students. By calling out to men and boys across the country, a small group of students (male and female) ignited a spark among the youth to speak up against inequalities faced by women and girls. In building substantive and visible support to HeForShe, this dedicated team of students from the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) in Lahore, Pakistan, engaged over 5,000 men and boys (mainly students from across Pakistan's Universities) to sign-up and show their solidarity.

The students, from "Zimal" (a girl's society with the tagline "Breaking Stereotypes for Her") and "Khardaar" (a boy's society with the slogan "As Brothers We Stand"), perhaps had nothing in common except for "a desire to eradicate all the social evils that promote gender discrimination in their society". Despite considerable resistance faced in advocating for such a campaign within a patriarchal society, these students maintained their support to HeForShe and persisted in their quest to raise awareness on the rights of Pakistani women.

With nearly 5,000 pledges, a team of 30 volunteers and a target of 48 hours, students from Zimal and Khardaar burnt the midnight oil to upload the commitments collected, and in the process contributed to the global HeForShe ticker crossing the 300,000 sign-up mark. Their next goal is to take Pakistan's online commitments to 10,000 and above. What is even more extra-ordinary is that these students are in their final year of engineering, preparing for end-of-term exams and finalizing their theses this month. With little help from the adults around them, these youngsters have proved that nothing is impossible when you set your mind to it. Rejoicing in their achievement, the students shared that the biggest challenge came in the form of resistance and even threats of violence from hardcore conservative groups who thought such a campaign is not needed, "We remained determined and despite the opposition raised more than 6,000 sign ups from men and boys in 3 days which in itself is a huge achievement". "This also instills hope in us that the youth of Pakistan is perhaps more aware of our social issues, and that they have a strong will to bring about a positive change in our country", they added.

A male organizer speaking on how engaging with HeForShe has changed his belief towards gender equality said “It is man who created the gender imbalance in the beginning. When man himself empowers women, he stands up against violence and harassment inflicted on them. He is breaking the stereotype and re-creates the new status quo”.

On the HeForShe movement, students shared “This campaign is a great initiative. Pakistan is among those nations that need campaigns like this to broaden peoples understanding on gender equality. We are proud to be a part of the HeForShe movement”.

Mr. Jamshed Kazi, speaking on this student-led initiative, said “Currently 40% of Pakistan’s people are aged 10-29 years, the largest cohort of young people in its history - this is expected to become even larger. This youth bulge provides an opportunity to invest in and harness the potential of young generations and lay a strong foundation for the future of Pakistan. Promoting gender equality requires input from both women and men, so it's great to see our male students actively getting involved with female students. When we launched HeForShe in Pakistan early this year, 720 Pakistani men and boys had signed up online to the campaign, today over 6,500 males are standing up for gender equality. On behalf of UN Women I would like to express our deepest appreciation to this incredibly dedicated and determined group of young volunteers. The students and youth who have demonstrated gender equality as their cause are the new generation ‘gender champions’. I encourage others to spread the word, build the momentum and join UN Women’s HeForShe movement in Pakistan”.
