



# Media Update

19 March 2015

## United Nations

### Statement

## United Nations in Pakistan urges Government to reinstate moratorium on the death penalty

The United Nations in Pakistan expresses deep concern at the increasing number and pace of executions in the country since December 2014, and at the Government's recent announcement that it has now withdrawn its moratorium on the death penalty for all cases, not only those related to terrorism. It has also been reported that among those executed there are persons who were minors when the offence was committed. According to some estimates, there are more than 8,000 prisoners on death row. The United Nations in Pakistan is also concerned about cases where the death penalty was handed to minors and welcomes reviews of these cases, such as the recent case of Shafqat Hussain. The UN has consistently called for an unequivocal end to the execution of anyone, anywhere, who is convicted of committing a crime when they are under the age of 18.

The right to life is a fundamental human right. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has stated that "The death penalty has no place in the 21st century", reflecting the global trend away from capital punishment. More than 160 United Nations Member States with a variety of legal systems, traditions, cultures and religious backgrounds, have either abolished the death penalty or do not practice it.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein has expressed deep regret at the resumption of executions in Pakistan, stressing that no judiciary – anywhere – can be infallible. He noted in December 2014 that "This is particularly disappointing given that just last week, a record 117 States voted in the UN General Assembly [Resolution 69/186 was adopted on 18 December 2014] in favour of an international moratorium on the use of the death penalty."



There is no scientific proof that the death penalty serves as a deterrent or contributes to combating crime or violent extremism. While we appreciate the need for effective counter-terrorism measures to protect people, including children, such action must strengthen human rights and be proportionate and necessary in a democratic society. Under international treaties, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Pakistan legally committed itself to ensuring due process and not imposing the death penalty. Moving away from the death penalty will contribute to human development, dignity and rights.

The UN in Pakistan, therefore, urges the Government to reinstate its moratorium as soon as possible. We stand ready to support it in doing so and to assist in strengthening the existing justice system if so requested.

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