

# PARLIAMENT WATCH – PAKISTAN\*

## JULY 2010



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\* Conceptualised, implemented and funded by South Asians for Human Rights; Research carried out by Kishwar Sultana and Kashif Javaid

## Meeting of the Monitoring Committee of Human Rights July 2010

The National Assembly of Pakistan's Monitoring Committee of Human Rights met in July 2010 at the Parliament House and focused on finalizing future guidelines and strategy to curb food adulteration in the country. The Committee expressed sorrow over the situation in which people of Pakistan could not dream of having pure and hygienic water, milk, milk products, meat and other edibles as they are the most adulterated items. Adulteration and contamination in edibles especially beverages, bottled water, cooking oil/ghee, spices, food colour, tea, sweeteners like sugar, sweetmeats and bakery products, milk and milk products and fruit and vegetable products remain a constant threat to the health of the citizens of Pakistan.

The Committee in its observations said that milk and water remain the most adulterated food items and that no city or locality of the country can be considered free from the presence and open sale of adulterated edibles. People are suffering from serious health threats arising with increasing adulteration in food items. Nutritionists say that use of substandard bottled water and adulterated milk, which contained water from ponds, could cause diarrhoea and dysentery while use of thickeners can cause cancer.<sup>1</sup> The Committee also observed that food adulteration is resulting in fatal diseases like cancer besides causing heart, liver and stomach complications. Observing further, the committee said that majority of the adulterators arrested or fined for the offence easily get bails. It pledged to stop adulteration in the country and ensure people's right to having healthy food.

It is important to note that majority of food items being used by citizens in Pakistan are either substandard or adulterated, which may cause diseases like hepatitis and cancer. The products including milk, milk products, edible oil, spices, beverages, fruit and vegetable products, cereals, sweets and baked products and bottled water were either found to be tainted with adulterants or not meeting the required food quality standards. Adulterants which were most commonly used were fertilizers, soda, medicines and even chemicals like formalin (a combination of formaldehyde, water and methanol), used to preserve dead bodies. These additives were mostly used to preserve the appearance or life of perishable food items.<sup>2</sup>

It is worthy to mention that adulterated food items are many times recovered and seized but no concrete step is taken against the responsible despite the availability of relevant laws.<sup>3</sup> Following dangerous impacts of adulterated food items on human health, doctors' community has also urged to promote the concept of general checking and standard food testing

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<sup>1</sup> 38% of food tested by district government adulterated, [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C10%5C25%5Cstory\\_25-10-2008\\_pg13\\_1](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C10%5C25%5Cstory_25-10-2008_pg13_1)

<sup>2</sup> 38% of food tested by district government adulterated, [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C10%5C25%5Cstory\\_25-10-2008\\_pg13\\_1](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C10%5C25%5Cstory_25-10-2008_pg13_1)

<sup>3</sup> Unchecked food adulteration, <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Opinions/Letters/04-Dec-2010/Unchecked-food-adulteration>

laboratories besides awarding punishment to the responsible.<sup>4</sup> It is equally important to mention here that now the government, over the recommendations of the Committee on Human Rights, has started taking measures to stop such inhuman practices in the country.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 38% of food tested by district government adulterated, [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C10%5C25%5Cstory\\_25-10-2008\\_pg13\\_1](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C10%5C25%5Cstory_25-10-2008_pg13_1)

<sup>5</sup> Punjab plans law to stem food adulteration, <http://www.dawn.com/2010/12/13/punjab-plans-law-to-stem-food-adulteration.html>; Now doctors to check food adulteration also, <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Lahore/18-Feb-2010/Now-doctors-to-check-food-adulteration-also>