

# PARLIAMENT WATCH – PAKISTAN\*

## MARCH 2010



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

# Proceedings of the National Assembly of Pakistan

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The 20<sup>th</sup> session of the National Assembly of Pakistan, which in fact marked the beginning of the third parliamentary year, commenced on March 17, 2010 and ended on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010. Business conducted in this session included legislation, call attention notices, resolutions, and discussions on issues of public interest.

In this session, parliamentarians strongly condemned a bomb blast at the office of an intelligence agency that left more than 13 people dead and dozens critically injured<sup>1</sup>. They condemned the government for failing to maintain law and order in the country and demanded it take immediate steps to curb terrorism and save the lives of the people of Pakistan. Member of the Assembly, Barjees Tahir, through an adjournment motion regarding this incident, said that no place in the country was safe anymore, which was reflected by the recent bombings in various districts of Pakistan.

They criticized the government for having no control as its own institutions were being destroyed by terrorism. They also questioned the government's ability to ensure safety of the lives and property of the people. They demanded the government to take appropriate steps to ensure protection of the people in all respects.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that bomb explosions or suicidal attacks by the terrorists have become a common routine in Pakistan. Whether it were the security forces, law enforcement agencies, government institutions, common public, regardless of sex, age or religion, all of them have now become easy targets of terrorism. Hundreds of people have lost their lives in such attacks.<sup>3</sup>

Another important item on the agenda of the House proceedings was the discussion on child labour and its enormous increase. Parliamentarians have called for urgent legislation against child labour in the country, to prevent child abuse and domestic violence. They called for this legislation in context of the death of a 12-year-old housemaid, Shazia, killed in Lahore due to alleged torture by her employers.<sup>4</sup> The House also passed a unanimous resolution to condemn the killing of Shazia and demanded the culprits be brought to justice<sup>5</sup>. Parliamentarians including Shahbaz Bhatti, Attiya Inayatullah, Wasim Akhtar, Dr. Nelson Azeem and others asked the government to immediately take steps for effective legislation against child labour so incidents like killing of Shazia could be controlled in the future. Attiya was of the opinion that death of Shazia was the result of delayed legislation against child labour. She urged action against gangs

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<sup>1</sup>Bomber flattens SIA building in City

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/09-Mar-2010/Bomber-flattens-SIA-building-in-City>

<sup>2</sup>MPs criticize government over poor law and order

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C03%5C13%5Cstory\\_13-3-2010\\_pg7\\_12](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C03%5C13%5Cstory_13-3-2010_pg7_12)

<sup>3</sup>Bomb Blasts in Pakistan, 2010

<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/bombblast2010.htm>

<sup>4</sup>12-year-old maid tortured to death by employer in DHA

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C01%5C25%5Cstory\\_25-1-2010\\_pg7\\_26](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C01%5C25%5Cstory_25-1-2010_pg7_26)

<sup>5</sup>National Assembly condemns Shazia's murder

<http://www.topix.com/forum/religion/islam/T71IC94LNTJLHCODG/p2>

involved in kidnapping of children and also demanded for giving proper legal cover against child labour in the country.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that after 1996, no survey on child labour has ever been conducted in Pakistan and according to that survey the number of children involved in labour in the country is only 3.313 million<sup>7</sup>.

It is also being feared that floods in Pakistan will also help increase child labour in the country<sup>8</sup>. Unless a survey regarding the matter in question is not conducted the magnitude of the problem cannot be understood or addressed properly and effectively. It is also lamentable to say that the issue of child labour is not being taken seriously<sup>9</sup> despite the fact that Pakistan is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). On the contrary, the children who should be fed or provided education and protection by the government are contributing to the economy of the country and their own plight is miserable.<sup>10</sup> Like the parliamentarians, the civil society of Pakistan too demands from the government for ensuring rights of the children through legislation and honour international commitments to save their future, grant them their rights of education, health, recreation, safety, food, movement and expression<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Lawmakers call for legislation against child labor

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C01%5C26%5Cstory\\_26-1-2010\\_pg7\\_33](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C01%5C26%5Cstory_26-1-2010_pg7_33)

<sup>7</sup> No survey on child labor after 1996, NA told

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Islamabad/10-May-2011/No-survey-on-child-labour-after-1996-NA-told>

<sup>8</sup> Pakistan: Child labor risks increase as people return home

<http://southasia.oneworld.net/todaysh headlines/pakistan-child-labour-risks-increase-as-people-return-home>

<sup>9</sup> Dark shadow of child labor

<http://www.dawn.com/2011/01/03/dark-shadow-of-child-labour.html>

<sup>10</sup> The State of Pakistan's Children

[http://www.sparcpk.org/events/launched\\_SOPC\\_2009.php](http://www.sparcpk.org/events/launched_SOPC_2009.php)

<sup>11</sup> Law demanded for child rights protection

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/166082/law-demanded-for-child-rights-protection/>