

PARLIAMENT WATCH – PAKISTAN*

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The 22nd session of the 13th Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was held in May 2010 and continued for 10 working days after commencing on 3rd May 2010. Legislation, call attention notices, resolutions, motions, discussions on issues of public interest were among the business conducted in this month.

As far as the business of the House regarding human rights was concerned, an important development was the introduction of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2010, brought forward by Member of the House, Shakila Khanum Rasheed¹. Reasons for the Bill state that “Offences of kidnapping and abduction with their various shades are increasing at an alarming rate in the society making everybody unsafe and insecure. Parents after sending their kids, sons and daughters to schools or other places of learning remain in the grip of fear till their kids return to home. It is a failure of law enforcement agencies like police and other responsible authorities as their performance remains questionable.” It further says, “Kidnapping and abduction is becoming a good business and source of earning for criminal elements² and they are snatching away life-long earnings of parents and their relatives at the cost of their kidnapped and abducted dear ones during their criminal business. There are so many deaths reported in the press of kidnapped or abducted persons due to inability or failure of payment of demanded ransom or killing and murdering or abducted persons after receiving the demanded ransom. Thus, kidnapping and abduction is becoming easy-earning and highly rewarding business which is not only increasing this crime but enhancing other criminal activities in the society. It is necessary to check and eradicate such criminal tendencies with stern punishments and by forfeiture of proceeds of crime or assets or properties accumulated by criminals by committing heinous crimes. Provision is also made to provide a share of fine to the victims or his legal heirs although it will not be compensation for their agonies but at least persuade them for pursuing such criminal matters in the courts of law.”

It also emphasized that the Government of Pakistan should review and enhance all punishments for the responsible. It provides for 10 year imprisonment and a fine of Pak Rupees 1 million for the responsible. It is important to note that kidnapping of children and adults in Pakistan is not new but rather a common routine.³ People have also been staging protests in routine against kidnappings, blaming the government for its failure over controlling the crime and providing protection to its citizens.⁴ Criminal elements like terrorists have made it their business and have become involved in mass kidnapping.⁵ Kidnapped children for ransom are even tortured, raped and killed.⁶ Sometimes it is also reported that police itself or some influential politician has been involved in a kidnapping case and hence the police

¹ Criminal law amendment bill 2010, http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1302325124_928.pdf

² Kidnapping for ransom a boon for militants, <http://www.thepersecution.org/news/11/dawn0126.html>

³ Child kidnappings a growing problem in Pakistan, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/child-kidnappings-a-growing-problem-in-pakistan-1916115.html>

⁴ Four people kidnapped in Balochistan, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C06%5C24%5Cstory_24-6-2010_pg7_21

⁵ Mass Kidnapping in Pakistan, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/cheat-sheet/item/mass-kidnapping-in-pakistan/terror/>

⁶ Another minor girl raped, killed, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2011/06/another-minor-girl-raped-killed/>

hesitate over registering criminal cases.⁷ However, making this kind of legislation over stopping kidnapping will definitely be a positive step and should be appreciated.

Another important bill concerning the safety of human beings has been the Pakistan Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 2010, introduced by parliamentarians Justice (Retired) Fakhar-un-Nisa Khokhar and Marvi Memon. It aims to bring the crime of throwing acid, with the aim of disfigurement of face or any other body part, under the provision of law within its proper definition and punishment. It provides for life imprisonment and a fine of Pak Rupees 0.5 million for the responsible⁸. It is important to note that bringing this kind of legislation is a positive step and every responsible citizen would like it to be passed. Disfigurement of body parts by throwing acid is an important issue in Pakistan where women and girls face different forms of torture and violence. As per some estimates, about 150 acid attacks are made every year in Pakistan particularly in the Balochistan and Sindh provinces. Many girls have suffered serious facial burns as a result of such attacks.⁹

Fakhar-un-Nisa also introduced the Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2010 in this month. The proposed amendment to the Bill requires the Registrar of Marriages to ensure that a premarital blood screening of the bride and groom is undertaken and a certificate to this effect is produced by each party before the marriage is registered. It aims to ensure the birth of a healthy child. In Pakistan, more than 12 million children and individuals are affected by Thalassaemia¹⁰ that can be controlled through appropriate medical tests before entering into wedlock. It can help prevent the birth of around 5000 to 6000 children suffering from the above mentioned disease every year. Making any legislation regarding the matter in question or to get this Bill passed can help ensure birth of a healthy child.

⁷Ninth class girl kidnapping case, <http://www.pakstudy.com/web/edu-news/ninth-class-girl-kidnapping-case>;
Industrialist, two sons' kidnapping case,
http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C06%5C12%5Cstory_12-6-2011_pg7_30

⁸proposed Pakistan Penal Code (Amendment) Bill 2010,
http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1302323713_770.pdf

⁹ Fanatics throw acid on 3 hijabless sisters Pakistan, <http://viewstonews.com/index.php/fanatics-throw-acid-on-3-hijabless-sisters-pakistan/pakistan>; Acid attack on Pakistani sisters in Balochistan,
<http://acidsurvivorspakistan.org/acid-attack-spreading>

¹⁰100,000 Pakistanis suffering from Thalassaemia, <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Islamabad/08-May-2009/100000-Pakistanis-suffering-from-Thalassaemia>; Govt to fund Thalassaemia patients' treatment, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C05%5C09%5Cstory_9-5-2010_pg11_1