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JUBILEE CAMPAIGN
ECOSOC Special Consultative Status (2003)

**Submission to the United Nations Committee against Torture regarding
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan
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LIST OF ISSUES**

Jubilee Campaign is a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2003. Our work focuses on promoting the rights of religious and ethnic minorities and raising the status of vulnerable women and children - to protect them from bodily harm and exploitation.

I. Introduction

Jubilee Campaign, in special consultative status with ECOSOC, submits this analysis of the infliction of torture against individuals detained for conduct which - although objectionable to certain majority faith communities - is guaranteed under domestic legislation and international treaties to which Pakistan is signatory. Article 20 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan outlines the right of every citizen to “profess, practice and propagate his religion”. Pakistan is also party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which in Article 18 enshrines the right of all people to “freedom of thought, conscience and religion”. The Human Rights Committee, which monitors the implementation of the ICCPR, in General Comment 34 (2011) concluded that “prohibitions of displays of lack of respect for a religion or other belief system, including blasphemy laws, are incompatible with the Covenant (ICCPR)”. The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Nearly every UN Special Rapporteur mandate holder - Heiner Bielefeldt, Ahmed Shaheed, and Nazila Ghanea - have echoed this assertion and called upon UN Member States to abolish blasphemy and apostasy laws as they unjustly encroach upon the right to FoRB. Moreover, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres has in multiple reports come to the similar conclusion that blasphemy laws are antithetical to international standards for human rights.

II. Convention against Torture - articles relevant to present submission

Article 1

For the purposes of this Convention, the term “torture” means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

Article 14

Each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. In the event of the death of the victim as a result of an act of torture, his dependants shall be entitled to compensation.

Article 15

Each State Party shall ensure that any statement which is established to have been made as a result of torture shall not be invoked as evidence in any proceedings, except against a person accused of torture as evidence that the statement was made.

Article 16

Each State Party shall undertake to prevent in any territory under its jurisdiction other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment which do not amount to torture as defined in article I, when such acts are committed by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.

III. The right to freedom from torture as it relates to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

In 2022 Pakistan ratified the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act in 2022. This bill defines torture as any “act committed by which severe physical pain or physical suffering, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him...intimidating or coercing him...” This provision does include a loophole, as individuals who experience “pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions” are not granted protections or redress, as such is not considered

a form of torture. The bill does disqualify confessions and information obtained by torturous methods and considers such to be inadmissible in a court of law.¹

A summary of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's (HRCP)² analysis³ of the new bill is as follows:

Positive Observations	Negative Observations
• First instance in which national legislation defines 'torture' • Mandates that allegations of torture conducted by public officials are properly investigated within thirty days and are adjudicated within three weeks • Stipulates punishment for custodial torture deemed commensurate with the gravity of the offense	• The definition of torture provided in the new bill does not include mental/psychological torture • The entity responsible for examining complaints of custodial torture - the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) - is required to "hold their fellow officers accountable", thus creating a conflict of interest and "constitut[ing] a moral hazard that will jeopardise the scope for impartiality" • The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) would be better suited than the FIA for investigating complaints of custodial torture • The penalties for custodial torture are taken from the pre-existing penal code and therefore do not "establish standalone punishments" unique to the punished conduct • No protections against harassment against individuals who file complaints against public officials for torture

Additionally, Pakistan's National Commission for Human Rights⁴ (NCHR) - not to be confused with the HRCP - conducted a joint analysis⁵ with Justice Project Pakistan, summarized below:

Positive Observations	Negative Observations
• Establishes definition for 'torture' and 'cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment' • Prohibits and criminalizes custodial rape as a distinct form of custodial torture	• The bill does not establish a specific branch within the FIA to investigate instances of custodial torture • The NCHR would be better suited than the FIA for investigating complaints of custodial torture; the NCHR is only granted supervisory duties • Unbiased investigations into instances of custodial torture are discouraged as FIA officials may be reluctant to implicate their colleagues, superiors, or subordinates • The death penalty is stipulated for instances of custodial death. Not only would there likely be fewer convictions as judges might be disinclined to punish state actors, but the death penalty in itself is widely considered to not have a deterrent effect and capital punishment is largely considered incompatible with human rights standards • Despite offering a definition for 'cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment', no penalties are outlined for such malfeasance

¹ [As Passed by the National Assembly] *A Bill to provide protection to a person during custody from all acts of torture perpetrated by public officials*, 2022.

² *The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is an impartial, non-profit non-governmental organization which monitors human rights developments in Pakistan*

³ HRCP, *Legislation Watch: Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act 2022*, September 2023.

⁴ *The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), distinct from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), is a statutory body established by the federal government to monitor human rights abuses. Though separate from each other, the HRCP calls for the permanent authorization and increased independence of the NCHR*

⁵ National Commission for Human Rights [Pakistan] (NCHR) & Justice Project Pakistan, *Gap Analysis: Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2022*, June 2024.

	• The bill does not address physical suffering or injury as a result of “lawful sanctions” • The penalties for custodial torture are taken from the pre-existing penal code and therefore do not “establish standalone punishments” unique to the punished conduct. The penal code does not define torture and therefore this can cause “confusion in punishment for different degrees of torture” • Harsh punishments for bad-faith or false accusations of custodial torture may deter victims from raising legitimate grievances “given the fear that their complaint may be construed as malafide”.
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The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners - the Nelson Mandela Rules - adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, outlines the following as necessary conditions for the humane detention of offenders: functional sanitary installations (i.e., showers, toilets); water and food of “nutritional value adequate for health and strength”; free health and medical care comparable to that which is provided in general society (including, when necessary, surgical intervention, medications, dental care, disability care; psychological treatment); physical exercise; appropriate and hygienic clothing; and gender-specific accommodations (i.e., feminine hygiene products, prenatal and postnatal care). With regards to inadmissible forms of punitive measures, prisons should not use: disciplinary employment; prolonged or indefinite solitary confinement; reduction or tainting of food or water; “degrading or painful” instruments of restraint; intrusive body searches conducted by staff of opposite genders. Comprehensively, Rule 42 stipulates that “general living conditions...including those related to light, ventilation, temperature, sanitation, nutrition, drinking water, access to open air and physical exercise, personal hygiene, health care and adequate personal space, shall apply to all prisoners without exception”. Some additional provisions relevant to this present submission include that: prisoners should be allowed regular correspondence with relatives; detainees should be interned in facilities as close as possible to their homes; and legal counsel should be provided to prisoners. Rule 66 indicates that “so far as practicable, every prisoner shall be allowed to satisfy the needs of his or her religious life by attending the services provided in the prison and having in his or her possession the books of religious observance and instruction of his or her denomination”.⁶

Pakistan continues to actively inflict torture upon faith minorities - namely, Christians and Ahmadi Muslims - in order to (1) extract false confessions of blasphemy, and (2) punish detainees who refuse coercion to accept Islam and instead maintain their minority faiths. Furthermore, Pakistan’s denial of medical care to prisoners can constitute torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In November 2023, the Human Rights Committee, in its List of Issues in relation to the second periodic report of Pakistan, raised concerns regarding the treatment of detained individuals and requested acknowledgment from Pakistan of endless reports “that many places of detention remain in dilapidated conditions, in which detainees lack access to adequate food, clean water, sanitation, sufficient space, lighting, heating, ventilation and medical care, and that individuals accused of blasphemy are allegedly subjected to poor conditions and remain in solitary confinement for extended periods”.⁷ Pakistan, in its May 2024 response to the Committee, claimed that “solitary confinement for accused [individuals] is practiced to ensure safety and protection of the accused persons”.⁸ While it is reasonable to infer that defendants facing blasphemy charges may require specialized protective measures due to risk of being targeted for violence by other prison inmates who feel angered by the individual’s minority faith affiliation or perceived insult to Islam, it has been acknowledged that solitary confinement can either have negative unintended effects on the prisoner or - at worst - be intentionally misused as a form of unlawful punishment against the prisoner. Nearly 33 years ago in 1992, the Human Rights Committee in General Comment 20 found that “prolonged solitary confinement of the detained or imprisoned person may amount to acts prohibited by [ICCPR] article 7 [prohibition of

⁶ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)*, [A/RES/70/175](#), 8 January 2016.

⁷ UN Human Rights Committee, *List of issues in relation to the second periodic report of Pakistan*, [CCPR/C/PAK/Q/2](#), 29 November 2023.

⁸ [Pakistan] UN Human Rights Committee, *Replies of Pakistan to the list of issues in relation to its second periodic report*, [CCPR/C/PAK/RQ/2](#), 20 May 2024.

torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.⁹ Concurrently, as early as 1999 the various mandate holders of the UN Special Rapporteurship on Torture have acknowledged that solitary confinement may “in itself” amount to ill-treatment or torture; in 2011, Special Rapporteur Juan Méndez explained that “the social isolation and sensory deprivation that is imposed by some States does, in some circumstances, amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and even torture”.¹⁰

In October 2024, the Human Rights Committee convened to review the reports on human rights in Pakistan submitted by civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, and the Pakistani government itself. During the 4154th meeting¹¹, the representative of Pakistan in his opening statement reassured that his country is committed to “preventing the misuse of the law on blasphemy, which was non-discriminatory and provided equal protection to Muslims and non-Muslims alike”; such an assurance of non-discrimination in the implementation of blasphemy laws fails to recognize that blasphemy laws in themselves are incompatible with human rights. Chair of the Commission’s 4154th meeting - Ms. Abdo Rocholl - specifically requested information on “what was being done to ensure the safety of prisoners accused of blasphemy without placing them in solitary confinement”, and specifically raised the case of university professor Junaid Hafeez, imprisoned on blasphemy allegations since 2019. In response the government representative of Pakistan cited the case of Christian woman Asia Bibi who was accused of blasphemy and who was exonerated by the Supreme Court on the grounds that her ‘confession’ was likely made under duress. The government official, however, does not address the most disturbing details of Bibi’s case - for which state actors were directly culpable - including that she languished on death row for 8 grueling years; was isolated from general prison population in a 8 by 10 foot cell without windows; was placed in a neck brace which was tightened and chained to the floor at prison guards’ discretion; and was forced to flee Pakistan after acquittal due to death threats made against her by radical Muslims who were unconvinced of her innocence.¹² Chairwoman Rocholl inquired about what measures Pakistan has taken - if any - to expand the prohibition of custodial torture to include psychological forms of torture, and what the outcome of complaints of torture were (i.e., whether public officials prosecuted or held accountable). The government representative replied that psychological torture has since been included within the purview of the 2022 Law, and that criminal proceedings were raised against 28 public officials (although whether these officials were temporarily suspended, permanently terminated, or penalized was not addressed).¹³

The following day, the Human Rights Committee convened to finish its review of Pakistan, in its 4155th meeting, during which committee members Yvonne Donders and Marcia Kran requested information from Pakistan about reports that individuals accused under the Anti-Terrorism Act had been denied due process and access to legal counsel, had been placed in prolonged pretrial detention, and had been subjected to “torture and abuse”.¹⁴ It is important to note that over the past few years, blasphemy suspects are often doubly charged under both the Pakistan Penal Code Section 295-A, and the Anti-Terrorism Act.¹⁵ During the Committee meeting, the government representative of Pakistan stated that “the Supreme Court had ruled that only acts that meet specific criteria and were intended to advance an ideological, political or religious cause could be deemed to be terrorism”; this statement should be considered as a reason why blasphemy suspects are targeted under the ATA.

Below are some select high-profile cases in which blasphemy accusations have resulted in the targeted party being imprisoned and subjected to conditions which may amount to torture or other cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment:

- Christian man Zafar Bhatti, formerly a door-to-door salesman and founder of an aid organization called ‘Jesus World Mission’, was arrested in 2012 after he was accused by a local Islamic cleric of sending blasphemous text messages. Bhatti spent five years in pre-trial detention, during which he maintained his innocence despite

⁹ UN Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 20, HRI/GEN/1/Rev.9 (Vol. I)*, 10 March 1992.

¹⁰ UN General Assembly 66th Session, Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, *A/66/268*, 5 August 2011.

¹¹ UN Human Rights Committee, *Summary record of the 4154th meeting, CCPR/C/SR.4154*, 17 October 2024.

¹² BBC, “Asia Bibi: I always believed I would be freed”, 28 February 2020.

¹³ *Supra* note 11.

¹⁴ UN Human Rights Committee, *Summary record of the 4155th meeting, CCPR/C/SR.4155*, 18 October 2024.

¹⁵ Christian Daily International, “‘No evidence’: Christian jailed on blasphemy charge released on bail”, 29 October 2024. ; Shaheryar Gill, “ECLJ Takes Action to Save a Young Christian Sentenced to Death for Blasphemy”, *European Centre for Law & Justice*, November 2024. ; Morning Star News, “Christian Charged with Blasphemy under Pakistan’s Terrorism Law”, 24 July 2023. ; Barnabas Aid, “Editorial: Christians Among Those at Risk as Pakistan Government Strengthens ‘Blasphemy’ Law”, 27 June 2023.

being tortured by prison officials. Additional District and Session Judge Mohammad Yar Gondal convicted Bhatti and sentenced him to life imprisonment, a punishment was increased to the death penalty upon appeal. Over the course of more than a decade in prison, Bhatti's health has rapidly deteriorated, as he has developed diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and degenerative eye conditions. He has additionally been the subject of numerous beatings by Muslim prisoners, and in 2013 he was left temporarily in poor condition after his food was poisoned. In 2020, Bhatti suffered a cardiac event and was promptly treated, although his application for medical bail was rejected. In July 2022, Bhatti reported that he received surgical intervention for an infection he was unable to feel due to diabetic neuropathy; he said that "living in this cell has left me prone to so many illnesses and conditions". Bhatti remains in detention and his most recent appeal hearing scheduled to occur in September 2024, was postponed. In all, Bhatti's trial has been adjourned nearly ten times since May.¹⁶

- Christian man Fansan Shahid was confronted by FIA authorities while in his home late one night in March 2022, after which the officials tortured him into confessing to blasphemy. Shahid's wife, Safia, witnessed the incident, and recalled that "over a dozen policemen rushed inside [the home] and started beating him up. My two children and I screamed and cried as they tortured Shahid and searched the rooms". Safia believes that her husband's phone, which he lost in 2019, was used by someone to post blasphemous remarks on social media accounts, which were then traced back to Shahid. She also explains that her husband would never engage in blasphemy, as he has many Muslim friends and coworkers, respects Islam, and is fully aware of the vicious consequences he would face if tied to accusations of religious offense.¹⁷
- Christian couple Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel were arrested together and subsequently separated from their four children and detained in separate prisons on charges of blasphemy. Blasphemous messages, written in English, were allegedly sent from Shagufta's phone to a local Muslim leader; the couple, however, are illiterate in their native language Urdu and it would be absurd to claim that they would be able to text in English. Authorities physically tortured Shafqat - who was already paralyzed after being hit by a stray bullet in 2004 - into confessing the couples' guilt; they had additionally threatened to undress his wife and force her to be exposed in public. Shagufta, who has since been acquitted and released along with Shafqat after seven years' imprisonment, has spoken out about the horrors imposed upon her and her husband. She shared that while in isolation, "I suffered from heat, hunger, and separation from my family".¹⁸ Miles away in a distant facility, Shafqat was at one point suspended from the ceiling while upside down and beaten with the butt of a rifle by prison guards.¹⁹
- Christian mother of four, Shagufta Kiran, was violently arrested in her home, in front of her husband and children, and interrogated for four days by FIA officials in July 2021. She was kept in prolonged pre-trial detention until she was officially sentenced to death in September 2024.
- In Islamabad, a group of private individuals - allegedly in collusion with the FIA Cyber Crimes Wing - collaborates to use fake people 'characters' to invite people to a location where they are apprehended, have their mobile phones seized, and are tortured into confessing to blasphemy. FactFocus reveals that suspects are then "transferred to FIA detention centers, where an FIR is already filed against them - their fate is predetermined by the torture they have endured and tampering of the evidence".²⁰
 - 22-year-old Fatima Jahangir was imprisoned in Kot Lakhpat Prison for two years after she was accused of blasphemy by Muslim man Muhammad Irfan, who is notorious for making blasphemy allegations against innocent individuals. Fatima was tortured over her two-year prison term and suffered both physically and psychologically, ultimately ending in her tragic death in April 2024. In her last meeting with her family before she passed, she appeared extremely frail and was unable to stand without assistance.

¹⁶ Church in Chains, *Zafar Bhatti*, updated September 2024.

¹⁷ Morning Star News, "Christian in Pakistan Arrested, Tortured on Blasphemy Charges", 21 March 2022.

¹⁸ Aid to the Church in Need, "Woman unjustly imprisoned for eight years in Pakistan: 'God was with me in this struggle'", 26 August 2024.

¹⁹ Aid to the Church in Need, "Pakistan: 'I spent eight years on death row after being falsely accused of blasphemy'", 6 May 2022.

²⁰ Ahmad Noorani, "Five Blasphemy Accused, Including a Young Girl, Killed in Jails After Horrific FIA Torture".

- Abdullah Shah was abducted, transported to a detention facility, and violently tortured into confessing to blasphemy. A report conducted by a special branch of the Punjab Police acknowledged that the case was entrapment, but that the police had reached a “compromise” with the perpetrators of the torture, leading to the case being hidden from the public; the victim’s father has also been threatened against speaking out about his sons case. Instead, FIA authorities claim that Shah was attacked by fellow inmates resulting in his death.
- Just over a month after being arrested, university student Syed Ali Husnain Shah passed away in detention, with post-mortem images of his body exhibiting “severe signs of torture”. Prior to his death, his health fluctuated, although whenever he was in pain he was not adequately treated and was merely provided with painkillers.
- Sohan Khan passed away two weeks after his arrest while he was detained at Malir Central Prison; he was violently sodomized with objects that left him fatally injured. Malir Prison and the FIA have rebuffed numerous demands to declassify Khan’s autopsy report. Court documents of his legal case reveal that the accusations against Khan were so absurd that the judge granted bail to four other men who were implicated at the same time as Khan and under similarly bogus allegations.

The NCHR embarked on a year-long independent inquiry²¹ into the treatment of blasphemy suspects in prisons across the country, namely to gather information on due process, arrest tactics, legal representation, evidence collection standards, prison facility conditions, recreation activities, population capacity, disciplinary practices, and more. Among the NCHR’s findings are:

- Overcrowding, improper bedding, and “deplorable” living conditions were rampant
- Post-arrest medical examinations are absent, presenting obstacles to maintaining the spread of illness or disease (especially relevant during COVID-19)
- Defendants with disabilities were not provided with accessibility accommodations
- In some cases of blasphemy suspects detained in District Jail Lahore, suspects were arrested not by state officials but by private individuals; “initial arrests were conducted by private individuals, in private cars, leading to private premises where the accused reported severe torture, including physical abuse, recording of videos, and electric shocks”
- Blasphemy suspect Husnain Ali passed away in custody after “mistreatment by FIA authorities; inmates reported that he was admitted to a hospital “due to severe pain” just prior to his death
- Blasphemy suspect Naik Muhammad, filed a complaint claiming he was subjected to custodial torture; his complaint was not acted upon, but the NCHR acquired a file with images depicting bruising and other injuries on Muhammad’s body

IV. Recommendations & Conclusion

Jubilee Campaign echoes Mr. Gómez Martínez of the Human Rights Committee, who justly and succinctly raised the following question: “Given that the judiciary was well aware of human rights issues and their constitutional implications, he [Martínez] failed to understand why no court had ever questioned the constitutionality of blasphemy laws and, more specifically, sections 295-A and 295-C, of the Penal Code, which provided that derogatory remarks against a given religion could in some cases even carry the death penalty. Did the State Party have any plans to repeal those sections?”²²

Jubilee Campaign additionally makes the following recommendations to the State Party under review:

²¹ National Commission for Human Rights [Pakistan], *Investigation into Blasphemy Cases: October 2023 to October 2024*, October 2024.

²² UN Human Rights Committee, *Summary record of the 4155th meeting*, *CCPR/C/SR.4155*, 18 October 2024.

- Amend or repeal legislation - such as Penal Code articles 295A and 295 C - which criminalizes blasphemy, as such conduct is protected under the banner of FoRB and is guaranteed as a non-derogable right by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to both of which Pakistan is signatory;
- Review and amend the 2022 Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act to, inter alia, (1) include recognition of psychological and mental torture; (2) prescribe punishments specifically for custodial torture which are proportionate to the malfeasance committed; (3) eliminate conflict of interest in the FIA's handling of cases of custodial torture committed by its own officers; (4) expand the authority of the NCHR to impartially investigate complaints of custodial torture, and guarantee necessary budget and resources for such work; and (5) provide safeguards from intimidation and retaliation to accusers;
- Eliminate the torturous practices of indefinite pre-trial detention and solitary confinement imposed upon individuals accused of blasphemy, and guarantee they are provided the same carceral services as the general prison populations (i.e., legal counsel, family visits, prompt healthcare, etc.);
- Unconditionally and expeditiously release all religious prisoners of conscience from detention who face absurd sentences and unconscionable treatment for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief;
- Provide family members of blasphemy defendants timely updates on the prisoners' health status, location, and legal developments; similarly, permit family visits and facilitate written/verbal/electronic communication;
- Take punitive measures against individuals who fraudulently implicate innocent civilians for blasphemy, whether by entrapment, baseless accusations, fabricated 'evidence', etc.;
- Offer restitution to survivors of custodial torture as well as family members of victims of custodial death;

Jubilee Campaign would also like to specifically emphasize the following recommendations made by the Human Rights Committee in its concluding observations on the second periodic report of Pakistan, iterated in November 2024²³:

- Ensure that the National Commission for Human Rights is empowered to investigate all allegations of human rights violations committed by members of the intelligence agencies and armed forces;
- Adopt robust measures to effectively prevent acts of discrimination and impunity, including by providing training and awareness-raising programmes for civil servants, law enforcement bodies, the judiciary, public prosecutors and religious and community leaders and promoting respect for diversity among the general public;
- Refrain from carrying out executions by maintaining a de facto moratorium, take specific steps towards adopting a de jure moratorium and consider abolishing the death penalty and acceding to the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;
- If the death penalty is maintained, the State party should ensure that it is provided only for the most serious crimes involving intentional killing;
- Ensure that the [1997 Anti-Terrorism] Act and other counter-terrorism legislation is not invoked or applied to unjustifiably limit any right enshrined in the Covenant, in particular the rights to life, liberty and security of person, procedural guarantees and freedom of expression and association, or to repress human rights defenders, members of ethnic and religious groups, journalists, dissidents and activists;
- Conduct thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture, ill-treatment and deaths in custody, in accordance with the relevant international standards...prosecute perpetrators and, if convicted, sanction them with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime and provide victims with full reparation;
- Ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty have access to an independent, secure and effective complaint mechanism for the investigation of allegations of torture and ill-treatment and guarantee the protection of complainants against reprisals;

²³ UN Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Pakistan*, [CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2](#), 2 December 2024.

- Take immediate measures to significantly reduce overcrowding in prisons, improve the conditions of detention and ensure adequate access to food, clean water, sanitation, feminine hygiene products and healthcare for persons held in all places of deprivation of liberty;
- Refrain from holding individuals in solitary confinement for a prolonged period of time;
- Reduce the use of pretrial detention and increase the use of non-custodial measures;
- Repeal all blasphemy laws or amend them in compliance with the strict requirements of the Covenant, put an end to the use of cybercrime laws such as the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016, to prosecute and detain individuals accused of breaching blasphemy laws online, and effectively investigate allegations of massive abuse of blasphemy laws in connection with cybercrime laws and publish the results of the inquiries;