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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Centre for Gender Justice and Women Empowerment, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 May 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Human Rights Challenges in Balochistan, Pakistan

The Centre for Gender Justice and Women Empowerment would like to bring to your attention the various human rights challenges in Balochistan, Pakistan, that remain a pressing concern, characterized by widespread and systemic abuses.

Balochistan has long been a site of conflict between the state and the Baloch calling for their right to self-determination, leading to a climate of repression. The major human rights issues range from socio-political, cultural, and economic suppression to the physical elimination of the Baloch through enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings by state security forces and intelligence agencies.

Human rights organizations have documented thousands of cases where activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens have been abducted, with many remaining missing for years or found dead with severe marks of torture.

Freedom of expression is severely curtailed in Balochistan. The region has become a no-go zone for international media, and mainstream media in Pakistan is not allowed to report on Balochistan. Local journalists and media outlets face intimidation and violence, creating a pervasive culture of fear that stifles critical reporting. This has resulted in significant underreporting of the human rights violations and humanitarian crises affecting the region.

Additionally, the economic, cultural, and social marginalization of the Baloch people exacerbates the human rights situation. The main languages of the Baloch, Balochi and Brahui, are not taught in schools, leading them to the verge of extinction. The natural wealth of Balochistan is being extracted by a nexus between Pakistan and China under the guise of mega projects, particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The local population often sees little benefit from the extraction of their resources. Despite being rich in natural resources, Balochistan remains one of the least developed regions in Pakistan. Access to education, healthcare, and basic infrastructure is limited, further entrenching poverty and underdevelopment.

The CPEC on the other hand has significantly contributed to the worsening of the human rights situation in Balochistan. Many villages falling en route to the CPEC have been forcefully evacuated without any remedy for their residents. Instead of addressing the concerns of the locals, the Pakistani authorities have brought forth a controversial plan to erect a security fence around the port city of Gwadar, central to the CPEC. The fencing plan has been met with strong opposition from local residents, and Baloch political, and human rights activists. The locals in Gwadar believe that fencing the city will isolate it from the rest of Balochistan and restrict the movement of local residents. This could exacerbate existing grievances and lead to greater socio-economic hardships for the local population. There are fears that the fencing could lead to increased militarization and surveillance, further infringing on the rights and freedoms of the local people. The history of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in Balochistan amplifies these concerns, with many worried that fencing could lead to more human rights abuses under the guise of security. Local businesses and fishermen have expressed concerns that the fencing will disrupt their livelihoods. The physical barrier could restrict access to vital economic zones and ports, impacting trade and daily economic activities. Many see the fencing as a symbol of political and social alienation.

The ongoing conflict in Balochistan and the lack of accountability for human rights abuses contribute to a cycle of violence and impunity. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to ensure justice, and uphold the fundamental rights of the people of Balochistan.

We request the United Nations to:

1. Dispatch a UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Balochistan to thoroughly investigate human rights violations committed by Pakistani security forces.
2. Press Pakistan to cease custodial and extrajudicial killings of Baloch people, and insist on presenting all abducted individuals before a court of law.

3. Press Pakistan to halt the fencing of Gwadar, aligning with the aspirations and rights of the local population.
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