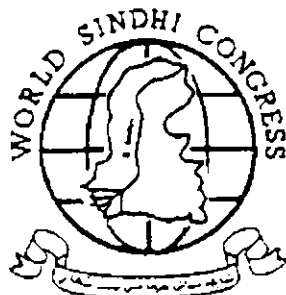


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UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities

Working Group on Indigenous Peoples

Fourteenth session

29 July - 2 August 1996

Item 5: Review of developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedom of indigenous people.

Statement by Dr. Munawar A. Halepota, Secretary General, World Sindhi Congress.

Madam Chairperson,

It is a great pleasure to meet the indigenous brothers and sisters, during this annual pilgrimage, and I extend greetings to all from the people of Sindh.

Sindh a land of peace and harmony covers an area of about 58,000 square miles, extending northwards from the Indian Ocean and straddling the Indo-Pak border. Watered by mighty Indus river, Sindh is rich with agriculture and natural resources including oil, gas, coal, diamonds gold and uranium. Inhabited by approx. 45 million Sindhis, descendants of the original inhabitants Dravidians, with their distinct culture language and civilization i.e. **Indus Civilization**, considered to be about ten thousand years old, and still surviving in the villages and towns of Sindh.

Now, the worlds oldest surviving civilization is under threat of extinction from terrorism, cultural dilution, settlement of illegal immigrants, persecution by the establishment and continuation of military operation "**Operation Blue Fox**" which has resulted in the blatant violation of human rights including Rape, Torture and Death in Custody by the

security forces. This has been reported by UN Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Amnesty International, Mr. Bacre Wally Ndiaye, UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Summary or Arbitrary Executions E/CN.4/1994/7, E/CN.4/1995/61, Amnesty International Report AI INDEX: ASA 33/05/93, AI INDEX: ASA 33/01/95, AI INDEX: ISBN 0-86210-245-6, News Statement of 23 May 1996, and Human Rights International Report HRI/SR/05/96.

The most notable among them being the torture and death in custody of **Shaheed Mohammed Yousuf Jakhrani**, Senior Vice Chairman of World Sindhi Congress, cold blooded murder by the security forces of ten innocent villagers from Tando Bahawal, and others including Mujeeb Haider Jatol, Ali Hyder Shah, Khadim and Sobho Indhar, Gulloo Machee, Photo Khaskhelli, Niaz Jatol. Even the highest court in the family has failed to provide the relief to the families and the culprits are at large, as the security forces are granted legal immunity from prosecution for any crime committed in good faith as per the Presidential Ordinance promulgated on 19th July 1992.

His Excellency G M Syed, 92 years old father of Sindhi nation, died in custody on 25th April 1995. G M Syed was detained for more than 30 years since the creation of Pakistan until his death for demanding the **Right of Self Determination** for Sindhi people as per International Law, and was declared '**Prisoner of Conscience**' by Amnesty International and Human Rights International.

Rt. Hon Syed Imdad Mohammed Shah, s/o His Excellency G M Syed and former Leader of Opposition Sindh Assembly, was recently prevented from coming to Geneva to participate in this session of the Working Group of Indigenous peoples, as leader of our delegation. He was take off the plane by the security forces, and told that his name is in the Exit Control List. e suffers from severe heart condition and was recently admitted to hospital in Karachi. Even the high court has failed to provide him any relief, and permission to travel abroad for medical treatment.

Recently on 29th June 1996, security forces raided the family home of His Excellency G M Syed in Sann district Dad Sindh. Opening fire and injuring many innocent civilians including women and children. Syed Jalal Shah, grandson of His Excellency G M Syed was also wounded by the bullet and later treated in a hospital. According to the reports entire town was sealed off by the security forces and the water supply was also cut off. Thousands of people, including women and children carrying the holy book, pleaded with the security forces to stop the raid and lift the blockade. The security forces responded y opening fire and shelling tear gas on the peaceful procession, inuring ninety six people and arresting more than 100 innocent civilians, some of whom are still detained without trial.

Madam Chairperson, on my recent visit to Sindh to meet my family and friends, I was arrested by the security forces and detained incommunicado at various places including CIA Torture Center Hyderabad, FIA Safehouse Islamabad and Death Cell in Rawalpindi Jail for more than a month in subhuman conditions. During this period I was denied any

medical and legal aid or visits from the lawyers family or friends. It was only after the increasing pressure for my release by the international community and internally that I was forcibly deported to UK on 4th January 1996. Now, I am told that I can not go back to my land to meet my family and my people.

Rape and torture of women, by the security forces and police is common in Sindh. Last year, a 16 year old girl kuki was raped by two army soldiers in broad day light in Hyderabad, the second largest city of Sindh. The girl was admitted to hospital in unconscious state, so far no action has been taken against the culprits and the family is denied any legal relief.

Recently nine young girls, aged 13 to 16 of Baluch tribe, were kidnapped by the police in Dadu. Their whereabouts are not known and the families have tried in vain to achieve their release. We are extremely concerned about their safety and security and appeal to the Government of Pakistan to ensure their safety and immediate release.

There is widespread violation of civil, political, cultural, social and economic rights as highlighted in the UN document E/CN.4/1994/NGO/56. Emergency rule has been declared in Sindh since more than 20 years, denying all constitutional and basic human rights.

a) More than eight million acres of land has been forcibly taken from local Sindhis and allocated to Military Generals and other outside settlers, forcing native Sindhis to abandon their centuries old ancestral homes and villages. Recently more than 200 miles of coastal land has been taken over by the defense forces, evicting local fishermen and depriving more than 2000 families of their livelihood.

b) The natural resources of Sindh, including oil, gas and coal are being indiscriminately exploited and taken away without due compensation to the local people.

c) Sindh is being deprived of its share of water from Indus River vital for agriculture, by construction of dams upstream, severely affecting the agrarian rural economy and resulting in the ecological disaster.

d) Widespread deforestation has further worsened the situation, as evidenced by the recurrent flooding, extinction of many endangered species and damage to the wild life.

e) Sindhi medium schools are being closed down, so much so that there is not a single Sindhi medium government school in Karachi, the capitol of Sindh.

f) The continuous settlement of outsiders has resulted in the disproportionate imbalance of the population resulting in the increasing tension between the native Sindhi people and the immigrants. The immigrants have further destroyed the native culture by bringing heroin and illegal weapons.

In the absence of any constitutional protection, Sindhis feel that their cultural, social economic, civil and political rights are being violated. Hence, Sindhis the indigenous people of Sindh, demand the Right of Self Determination, as per International conventions.

In view of the continuing violation of human rights in Sindh, an impartial United Nations fact-finding mission is essential and will be welcomed by the indigenous people of Sindh. Immediate measures must be taken to ensure that Sindh & Sindhis continue to participate in the peace, progress and stability of the region. Anything less puts the world's oldest surviving civilization at risk of extinction.

I appeal to the Indigenous brothers and sisters for their support in our peaceful struggle against the neocolonisation and occupation of our land and massacre of our people.

Thank you again, Madam Chairperson.