

Opening Statement by Ahmar Mustikhan, founder, American Friends of Balochistan

Dear friends:

I welcome you all on behalf of the American Friends of Balochistan, the premier pro-independence Balochistan organization in the United States.

I thank you for your concern over the fate of the victims of enforced disappearances all over the world, including Occupied Balochistan.

Articles 1 and 2 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance specifically states that,

1. No one shall be subjected to enforced disappearance.
2. No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for enforced disappearance.

Article 5 of the convention further states that "The widespread or systematic practice of enforced disappearance constitutes a crime against humanity as defined in applicable international law and shall attract the consequences provided for under such applicable international law."

Article 17, section 1, of the convention states "No one shall be held in secret detention."

The United States has yet to ratify the U.N. convention against enforced disappearance.

Countries like Pakistan apparently feel emboldened to carry on with their enforced disappearance and other crimes against humanity in Occupied Balochistan because of lack of interest on this critical issue in the West, including the U.S.

According to the 2010 report of the U.N. Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances largest number of urgent appeals, 10 each, were sent to Pakistan and Mexico on new cases of enforced disappearances last year.

Overall, 48 news cases were reported to the WGEID in 2010 and the new cases that were reported to the WGEID during 2010 were Mexico 10 and Pakistan 8.

However, Pakistan alone had more than 200 such cases where the victims were killed as part of Pakistan's kill-and-dump policy in Occupied Balochistan.

Enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings are a norm in Occupied Balochistan, a France-sized strategic territory in southwestern Pakistan which forms more than 40 percent of Pakistan's land mass and less than 10 percent of its people.

Since July 2010, more than Baloch secular political activists have been forcibly disappeared and executed in Balochistan and their bodies thrown in the wilderness as part of the kill-and-dump policy of the Islamic republic of Pakistan.

You can see on the board the dead bodies of three such victims Qayyum Baloch, Ilyas Nazar and Qambar Chakar.

In its 2010 report on Pakistan the WGEID noted with concern the increase in the number of contemporary cases of enforced disappearances in Pakistan and reminds the Government of its obligations under the Declaration to prevent and terminate acts of enforced disappearance in any territory under its jurisdiction (art. 3).

The Working Group called upon Pakistan to sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and accept the competence of the Committee under articles 31 and 32.

Organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances, Unicef, Reporters Without Borders, Committee to Protect Journalists, International Federation of Journalists have all voiced their concern at the horrific situation in Occupied Balochistan. However, their urgent actions need to be further heightened.