

[AHRC Forwarded Statement] PAKISTAN: High Commissioner alarmed about Pakistan state of emergency

Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission is forwarding a statement on the state of emergency in Pakistan by Louise Arbour, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Asian Human Rights Commission
Hong Kong

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A Statement from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights forwarded by the Asian Human Rights Commission

PAKISTAN: High Commissioner alarmed about Pakistan state of emergency

November 5, 2007

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said today she is alarmed over the suspension of fundamental rights and imposition of a state of emergency in Pakistan.

Pakistan has not ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but the High Commissioner noted that, under accepted rules of international law, fundamental rights, such as the right to life, the prohibition on arbitrary detention, torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, cannot be suspended even in times of emergency. Such far-reaching restrictions of rights must be proportional and may only be applied to the extent and for the time strictly required by the situation.

"A state of emergency should only be used to deal with a dire security threat to the nation, not to undermine the integrity and independence of the judiciary", the High Commissioner said.

The High Commissioner expressed concern about reports that leading judges, lawyers and political and human rights activists have been detained or placed under house arrest, including United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief, Asma Jahangir. The High Commissioner called on the Pakistan authorities to clarify the status of those detained and ensure that no one is detained for the peaceful exercise of their political beliefs.

José Luis Díaz
Information Officer, Spokesperson
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

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About AHRC: *The Asian Human Rights Commission is a regional non-governmental organisation monitoring and lobbying human rights issues in Asia. The Hong Kong-based group was founded in 1984. The above statement has only been forwarded by the AHRC.*

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