

## SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS: STEPS TOWARDS PEACE BUILDING IN PAKISTAN (2018-2021)

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### Abstract

*This research piece examines the substantial contribution made by the Senate Committee on Human Rights in advancing peacebuilding endeavors within Pakistan during 2018-2021. This study investigates the committee's function in fostering responsibility, offering suggestions for enhancing policies and overseeing the execution of established legislation as well as committee's efforts for passing bills. This study focuses on what kind of efforts made by committee to cultivate peace by promoting human rights, justice, and harmony within the country? The study utilizes an analytical methodology, incorporating primary data of Human Rights Committee reports, Senate Debates and Bills passed by Senate. Secondary data refers to media reports and scholarly publications. The study concludes that the committee's worked effectively to promote legislative reforms aimed at safeguarding human rights, fostering social cohesion, and tackling difficulties stemming from conflicts for the peace building in the country. The Senate Committee on Human Rights in Pakistan was actively engaged in focusing the accountability, formulating policy recommendations and foster collaboration with civil society to commemorate the role of government institutions in public.*

**Keywords:** Senate of Pakistan, Committee's effectiveness, Peace Building, Human Rights, Civil Society, Legislative Reforms

### INTRODUCTION

The Senate of Pakistan is working as the Upper House of the Parliament since the promulgation of 1973's Constitution of Pakistan. The House undertakes the legislative work in the country as a representative of State at equality basis. To make the working of Senate more fluent, the House constituted committee system as these Committees undertake most of the work of an institution in institutionalized legislative system. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, "a committee is a group of people officially delegated to perform a function, such as investigating, considering, reporting, or acting on a matter (Heritage, 2000)."

Some committees are temporary based that dissolve after completion while House contains a number of Standing committees constituted by standing orders or laws that endure perpetually. These Committees are usually tasked to explain the received motions, resolutions, and petitions to the House. A special committee can be created on the proposal of senator with the consent of House. Article 67 of the Constitution vested the power to House to regulate its rules and determined that the House may manage its procedure (Pakistan, 2012).

Parliamentary committees are fundamental to legislative systems of the world. In 1955, K.C. Wheare authored a book entitled "Government by Committee," which implied the significance of committees and that there is no alternative of committee (Shaw, 1998). Parliament's complex work increased legislature's involvement and reliance on committees to develop a multifaceted system. Moreover, committees are now denoted as the "political nerve ends, the gatherers of information,

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the sifters of alternatives, the refiners of legislative detail (Pakistan S. o., 2012).” The demand for committees augmented due to legislative suffrage as the extensive discussions about legislative Bills and key topics are referred to committees.

Senate’s rules established Standing Committees and involved them with concerned Ministries for effectively work on government business and on deferred topic or any other matter disposed to committee or Ministry. A Committee, however, can take *suo-moto* on expenditure, administration, subordinate legislation, public petitions, and on Ministry’s policies. These committees reviews lawmaking, oversee the executive branch, inspect and reports on policies, and investigates infrequent inquiries (Benda, 1996). Standing Committees, Functional Committees, Joint Committees and Special Committees undertake distinct functions.

The purpose of legislation in a country is to regulate human behaviors and to observe that in a functioning legal system all activities are carried in accordance with law (Hughes, 1968). In Article 9 to Article 28, Constitution of Pakistan clarifies that every person has fundamental rights as a citizen of an independent civilized country either he or she is a man, woman, child or a transgender (Pakistan G. o., Constitution of Pakistan, Article 9-28 , 2012). Universal Declaration of Human Rights also narrates that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law (Nations, 1948).”

Parliament as a supreme authority on legislation is posed to ensure the human rights in the country for peace building. Senate as a representative of federating units is also liable for peace building and ensuring human rights. However, Senate of Pakistan was not as active as it had to be in case of human rights. Surprisingly, there was no committee on Human rights in 1973 as there were only six standing committees (Pakistan S. o., First Senate of Pakistan, 1980). The youngest functional Committee of the House is committee on Human Rights, which was constituted in 1993 (Iqbal, 2023). The Committee was posed to analyze the allegations of affected parties, organizations, foreign bodies, Human Rights Commission and the public of Pakistan on human rights violations nationwide.

The Committee on Human Rights critically reviewed the House bills, analyzed policies and improved the bill technically. It also resolved bill issues, enhanced understanding, and removed limits to reach consensus for better legislation. However, there were ups and downs in the working capacity of committee throughout the history of committee. This study tried to analyze the role of Committee on Human Rights in peace-building in Pakistan. An analytical method of research is used to examine the role of committee through committee’s reports presented to the Senate during 2018-2021. This study sought whether the committee effectively worked on peace-building by ensuring human rights matters? If the committee did so, what kind of legislative measures taken by the committee for the rights of women, children, and society to ensure the peace is society? It also sought other kinds of violations in the country during the said period and examined that what kind of measures were taken by the committee on those issue?

#### **Senate Committee on Human Rights (2018-2021)**

On March 12, 2018, the Senate of Pakistan went through an electoral process. The Committee on Human Rights was reconstituted as the House elected new Senators to half of its total membership as determined in the rules. The committee had worked for three years until the new elections of the House. Human Rights Committee was consisted of fourteen members including Minister for Human Rights as an Ex-Officio member. The committee members were as follow:

**Members of Senate Committee on Human Rights**

Sr.#	Senator Name	Political Party
1	Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar (Chairman)	Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentary
2	Raja Muhammad Zafar-ul-Haq	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
3	Rana Mahmood-ul-Hassan	Independent
4	Muhammad Tahir Bizenjo	National Party
5	Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah	Pakistan Muslim League (Functional)



6	Keshoo Bai	Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentary
7	Prof. Meher Taj Roghani	Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf
8	Hidayat Ullah	Independent
9	Muhammad Ali Khan Saif	Muttahida Qaumi Movement
10	Sana Jamali	Independent
11	Dr. Jehanzeb Jamaldini	Balochistan National Party
12	Muhammad Usman Khan Kakar	Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party
13	Ayesha Raza Farooq	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)

Source: Senate of Pakistan

In the year 2018, the committee had reported on five different kinds of issues consisting on the matters of women, child, juvenile, criminal law and a matter raised on the point of public importance.

On April 11, 2018, Mr. Mumtaz Ahmad Tarar moved three Bills, “the Women in distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2017” to amend the Women in Distress and Detention Fund Act, 1996, “The Juvenile Justice System Bill, 2018” and “The Islamabad Capital Territory Child Protection Bill, 2018.” The bills were passed by the National Assembly and Mumtaz Tarar intended to take the bill into consideration. However, the Chairman Senate referred the bill to concerned committee by adding that the honorable Minister should act in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Senate (Pakistan S. o., Senate Debates, April 11, 2018).

The bill on “Women in distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2017” was basically presented to facilitate the imprisoned women who get financial and legal assistance. It was asked to ease the provision of funds by substituting the authorities. The bill determined that Section 6, sub-section (1), clause (1) and (8) should be substituted. Minister-in-charge of the Administrative Division should act as Chairperson of the committee and one member from National Assembly, one from Senate, Secretary of the administrative division, and one social worker woman from each province nominated by provincial government would be members while an appointed officer of BPS-20 would be member cum secretary of committee.

The committee observed that the fund was created to offer financial and legal aid to incarcerated women who were facing various allegations and had experienced significant hardships during imprisonment. After the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment of Constitution and the subsequent reassignment of responsibilities among different Ministries, it was necessary to make amendments in the said Act to ensure the effective functioning, which aimed to provide benefits to women in all social spheres. The committee endorsed the proposed bill by adding that the legislation aimed to accomplish the aforementioned goals (Rights, 2018).

The Parliament of Pakistan attempted to secure the children of Islamabad Capital Territory from all kind of physical or mental violence, injury, neglect, maltreatment, exploitation, abuse and other relevant matters. The matter was quite important for peace building by assuring the rights of children as maltreatment, exploitation and abuse can harm the peace of a region. The committee observed that Article 35 of the Constitution mandated that the State had the responsibility to safeguard the children and Article 25(3) authorized to enact certain measures. Pakistan is also a signatory to the UNCRC that also bound to take and implement certain measures for children. Each province under 18<sup>th</sup> amendment was liable to set child protection laws, while the Islamabad Capital Territory required distinct legislation to safeguard the rights of children.

The committee added that the bill aimed to provide appropriate care to children, ensured their protection from acts of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect in accordance with the Constitutional provisions and international duties. Therefore, the measures outlined in the said legislation would considerably contribute to the protection of children in the region (Rights, Report on “The Islamabad Capital Territory Child Protection Bill, 2018”, 2018). The aforementioned bill was intended to be accomplished by the proposed legislation so the committee had accepted the bill without any changes.

In case of “the Juvenile Justice System Bill, 2018,” the government intended to provide for criminal justice system and social integration of juveniles. In the same way of above mentioned bill, the



committee had observed that Article 35 and 25(3) of Constitution and UNCRC safeguards the children thus it was obligated to implement certain measures for rehabilitating juvenile individuals. The purpose to amend the existing laws pertaining to the criminal justice system for juveniles was to place special emphasis on the resolving the cases through diversion and the social reintegration of juvenile. In addition to this, Lahore High Court, Lahore also invalidated the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance, 2000 and the court noted that the Parliament have to pass a new legislation to address the shortcomings. Therefore it would be advantageous to establish protocols for legal actions by incorporating measures for diversion and social reintegration of children (Rights, Report on "The Juvenile Justice System Bill, 2018", 2018). These measures taken in bill were aimed to avoid formal judicial proceedings by prioritizing the resolution of matters of juveniles as well as focused on the rehabilitation of children through established institutions and bodies; therefore the aforementioned Bill attained the consent of committee.

On May 8, 2018, Senator Sassui Palijo presented the "the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018," passed by the National Assembly to amend the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 (Palijo, 2018). The modifications pertained to Section 292C of Act XLV of Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 to replace the existing penalties for Child Abuse. The previous penalties referred two to seven years imprisonment with two hundred thousand rupees to seven hundred thousand rupees or with both. The bill demanded to increase the penalty to fourteen years to twenty years with fine not be less than one million rupees. However, the Section 377B related to Child pornography should be amended by replacing the seven years imprisonment and five hundred thousand rupees or both with fourteen years to twenty years imprisonment and one million rupees fine. The same kind of amendments of in the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 (Act V of 1898) Schedule II was also proposed by the Lower House (Pakistan S. o., The Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 2018, 2018).

On the suggested amendments, the committee opined that the occurrence of recent incidents involving the sexual abuse of children around the country had underscored the imperative for imposing stringent penalties upon the perpetrators. The committee sought the existing punishments insufficient in relation to the severity of the offense and the proposed legislation associated with the offenses of child pornography and sexual abuse of children (Rights, Report on "The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018", 2018), therefore, the committee accepted the bill without any interpretations.

On May 25, 2018, Senator Sassui Palijo raised the point of public importance by highlighting the increasing cases of missing persons in Sindh Province. She stated that missing persons generally accused persons but they even not represented to the concerned courts after many weeks and months. Their children especially girls had protested against this missing outside the Karachi Press Club. Federal law enforcing agencies did this manhandling, which was against the human rights (Palijo, Senate Debates, May, 25, 2018). This act distorted the peace of the province so the matter should be referred to Committee on Human Rights.

For the said purpose, the Committee on Human Rights framed a Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. The Chairman of commission informed the Committee that a total of 1397 cases of missing persons in Sindh were reported and among them 1174 cases were resolved and 183 cases were pending. In lieu of pending cases, the Government of Sindh had received 135 reports of missing persons but no progress was made. The Chairman of Commission apprised that a number of persons emigrated from Pakistan or relocated to different places within Pakistan, unbeknownst to their family members. The investigation unveiled that some of missing persons were involved in criminal activities and were under the custody of law enforcement authorities.

The Committee on Human Rights determined that the unaccounted matter needed quick resolution and determined that the imperative was the establishment of a legal structure that encompassed the criminalization and imposition of penalties for enforced disappearances so in order to properly address the enforced disappearances, amendments to section 365 of the CrPC and PPC were necessary. The Committee recommended the Ministry of Interior to furnish the reports prepared by Justice Kamal Mansoor and Justice Noor Muhammad Meskanzai about enforced disappearances cases

and missing cases and suggested to enforce and to disclose those suggestions to the public. The Committee asked to Secretary of the Ministry of Interior for a personal briefing on that time status. The Human Rights Committee directed to the Ministry of Human Rights to involve all relevant parties for formulation of law that would criminalize enforced disappearances by establishing it as an actionable offense. In order to tackle the matter of missing persons, the Committee made a formal request to Senator Sassui Palijo to take necessary actions regarding the 135 cases of missing persons those were referred by the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances to the Sindh Government (Rights, Report on the Point of Public Importance Rasised by the Senator Sassui Palijo, 2018).

The Senate Committee on Human Rights discussed the said five issues during the year. In which first four were addressed on May 9, 2018 in one sitting while the issue of missing persons was addressed within three months. The committee had reported to Senate within short span of time that unfolded the efficiency of committee and its role for ensuring the peace and human rights earliest. All the said matters were directly linked to public insecurities that ultimately harm the peace of a nation.

In the year 2019, two matters were referred to the committee including one bill and one matter of public importance. The private bill referred to committee was related to “the Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill, 2018,” which was introduced by Senator Sherry Rehman on the floor of the House. The reason behind the proposed bill was to curb the menace of child marriage prevalent in the country and to save women from exploitation on that account (Rehman, 2018).

Senator Sherry Rehman provided an overview, objectives and justifications for the Bill and the efforts done by former Senator Sehar Kamran. She added that comprehensive consultations were conducted with stakeholders for the revision of said bill. The primary objective of Bill was to prohibit the practice of marriage before the age of 18 and the Bill would alleviate any ambiguity surrounding the precise delineation and chronological threshold of childhood, which is uniformly established as 18 years.

Human Rights Committee member, Senator Muzaffar Hussain Shah supported the viewpoint and added that there was a need to reword the Act of 1929. He expressed that if the Committee deemed it suitable, the Act can undergo a thorough examination with the Minister of Human Rights and regional lawmakers. This step would create uniformity between the federation and its constituent units. The amendment aligned closely with societal demands and perhaps aligned with international conventions and treaties.

Other members, Senator Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani emphasized that the pervasiveness of underage marriages raised the rates of maternal and newborn death. Senator Mohammad Ali Saif asserted that Pakistan had entered into international agreements that establish 18 as the age of majority and it was also recognized and enforced by other Muslim nations as the attainment of adulthood encompasses many developmental phases such as mental, physical, and emotional aspects. Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq supported its implementation to tackle concerns such as stunted growth, high mortality rates, and both physical and mental health issues. Senator Usman Khan Kakar, Senator Sana Jamali and Senator Keshoo Bai also raised concerns on the prevalence of early marriages and expressed robust support for the proposed modifications.

Senator Hidayatullah viewed that the Government of KP might consider introducing a comparable legislative proposal that could be expanded and enforced in the tribal regions of the province. The amendment in Bill was also endorsed by NCHR as well as Minister for Human Rights, Ms. Shireen Mizari. The Chairman of the Committee expressed that the significant contributions and insightful remarks of the members unfolded that the implementation of this legislation would reduce the practice of child marriage and it would effectively communicate a positive message emanating from the Parliament to the Provinces (Rights, Report on “the Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill, 2018”, 2019). After the careful consideration, the Committee reached a unanimous recommendation to pass the Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill, 2018, as presented in the House.



On April 30, 2019, Senator Muhammad Usman Khan Kakar raised an issue pertaining to the blocking of CNICs of Malik Attah Ullah Khan Bajore and his family members (Kakar, 2019). The matter was subsequently referred to the Committee for examination and report submission as the matter was directly hitting the humans' identity within a state. The said matter also caused strains in the region that could harm the peace condition.

Senator Muhammad Usman Khan Kakar provided an overview to committee that Chairman NADRA had blocked the CNICs of Malik Attah Ullah Khan Bajore, a two-time district president of the Awami National Party (ANP), and his family members in November 2017 on the recommendations verified intelligence agency's report. Malik Attah and his family presented themselves before the NADRA Regional Verification Board, which forwarded their case to the Deputy Commissioner of Tribal District Bajaur for further verification. However, the failure of the Deputy Commissioner Bajaur to give a clearance certificate resulted in blocking of the CNICs. Furthermore, NADRA officials exploited the persons by exerting pressure dared to voice opposition to the "war on terror" while Mr. Attah had tragically experienced the loss of about twelve family members, including one of his sons, as a consequence of his refusal to collaborate with militant groups.

Hikmatullah, the son of Malik Attah Ullah Khan Bajore, told the committee on behalf of his father that their family was experiencing political persecution and his father had endured multiple assassination attempts. He expressed dissatisfaction on withdrawal of security given by the State to his father. Hikmatullah presented a certificate as evidence issued by Inspector General Frontier Corps (North) for demonstrating patriotism for collaborating with law enforcement agencies during military operations.

The Committee expressed its dissatisfaction on revocation of security and reached a unanimous recommendation to guarantee comprehensive security to Malik Attah Ullah Khan Bajore and his family members. The Chairman Committee indicated that the act of questioning the citizenship status of an individual represented a deplorable instance of political victimization. However, he expressed his inability to articulate disapproval of the measures taken by the State and to articulate the distressing circumstances in which a Pakistani citizen was being subjected to humiliation.

The Committee expressed dissatisfaction with blockage of CNICs of Malik Attah Ullah Khan Bajore and his family members. The action of Deputy Commissioner stood inadmissible and the committee called Deputy Commissioner Bajaur to provide a briefing on the matter. The committee emphasized that these kinds of actions should be carried out under the explicit commands of a court authority, rather than Deputy Commissioner.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the Committee, Mr. Usman Mehsud, the Deputy Commissioner of Bajaur presented himself before the Committee. He expressed his lack of jurisdiction in this matter to restrict the CNICs and added that NADRA has the authority to suspend identity cards based on recommendations of intelligence agencies. NADRA forwarded the matter to former DC for verification who viewed that additional study was necessary while Political pressure was built to change the opinion. However, the issue was resolved and Brigadier (Retd.) Nisar Mir, the DG Operations NADRA expressed his apologies to Malik Attah Ullah Khan Bajore for the trouble. He further informed the Committee that 123,000 CNICs across all provinces were rendered inactive due to uncertainties surrounding their nationality.

The Committee concluded that NADRA and other relevant Ministries/departments had confirmed that Malik Attah Ullah Khan Bajore and his family members were legitimate residents of Bajaur. The Committee reached a unanimous consensus to propose the resolution of the said Public Point and recommended that deliberations regarding the 123,000 cases of blocked CNICs to alleviate the challenges faced by Pakistani nationals (Rights, Report on Point of Public Importance raised by Senator Muhammad Khan Kakar, 2019).

In the year 2019, the committee presented two reports to the Senate. The first matter was addressed within one month while the second matter was addressed with 25 days. It unfolded the efficiency of Functional Committee on Human Rights as well as the struggle of committee to ensure the Human Rights in the regions for development of peace-making in the country.

The year 2020 witnessed four referred works to Functional Committee on Human Rights. It included three bills and one point of public importance. One of the bills was “the Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Bill, 2020.” The reason behind the proposal of bill was Zainab Amin Ansari, a seven years old girl who was subject to an abduction incident at Kasur, Punjab on 4 January 2018, when she was on her route to Quran recitation courses. Her remains were discovered after five days of her disappearance in a garbage disposal area of Lahore on January 9, 2018 and post-mortem report revealed that she was endured severe sexual assault and physical abuse before death (Guardian, 2020). Twenty four years old Imran Ali was perpetrator of sexual assault and homicide who was engaged in a pattern of repeated offences with at least seven documented cases of rape and murder (News, 2018).

The bill was presented by Dr. Shireen Mazari on January 14, 2020 on the floor of the House as National Assembly already had passed the bill with consensus. The bill was referred to the committee and Senate asked the committee to respond on the bill in short span of time (Pakistan S. o., Senate Debates, January, 14, 2020). The Committee on Human Rights thoroughly studied the matter and submitted its report after conducting four sessions during 40 days. The committee recommended 32 amendments for the enhancements of presented bill.

The significance of the Bill was affirmed by the Committee, though its intended scope was limited to the ICT. The occurrences of abduction and child exploitation were observed throughout the entire nation, therefore, the Committee viewed that such kind of cases should be adjudicated by the Anti-Terrorism Courts. Senators Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani, Muhammad Ali Khan Saif, Faisal Javed, Dr. Jehanzeb Jamaladini, Keshoo Bai, and Kamran Michael endorsed the said proposal, but during another meeting, the Committee consider determined that the would be conducted through designated courts.

Senator Quratulain Marri added that the Bill was confined for the Islamabad Capital Territory due to provincial autonomy so provinces could also enact their own legislation. Senator Muhammad Usman Khan Kakar emphasized to expand the Bill to entire Pakistan. Federal Minister of Human Rights, Dr. Shireen Mazari opined that the bill aimed to enhance the issuance of alerts and to take appropriate measures to ensure the recovery of abducted, abused, kidnapped or missing children inside ICT. There was dire need to enhance the existing legislation and protocols to form robust framework for the monitoring, tracing, and recovery of missing and abducted children (Rights, Report on “the Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Bill, 2020”, 2020).

The Senate of Pakistan approved the bill and President ratified the bill on March 24, 2020. The bill included the alerts for children but after 76 days, Senator Waleed Iqbal raised a Point of Public Importance regarding the brutal killing of Zahra Shah, an eight year old girl, in Rawalpindi. Zahra Shah was a working child in a house who tragically lost her life after physical assault following an incident in which she inadvertently allowed valuable parrots to escape within an upscale locality in Rawalpindi (Jalil, 2020).

The matter was referred to committee on June 10, 2020 and committee reported the House on July 14, 2020. The SSP (Investigation) in Rawalpindi briefed the Committee about the progress of the investigation and measures taken by Police and prosecution to ensure a prompt and rational resolution of the matter. He informed that the deceased girl was a domestic servant at the residence of Hassan Siddiqui, a professional property dealer located in Bahria Rawalpindi. He further unfolded the facts of medical treatment given to the affected child. In Begum Akhtar Rukhsana Memorial Hospital, the child was transferred with grave condition but she did not get medical treatment due to unavailability of doctors and ultimately the girl died due to injuries at 04:02 am on January 6, 2020. The post-mortem examination revealed evidence of severe physical assault, including extensive injuries to the head, cheeks, neck, ankles, back, thighs, inner thighs, armpit, ribs, arms as well as the bleeding from the genital region led to the inference of possible sexual assault. The couple was arrested and the husband’s mobile had distressing videos depicting acts of cruelty towards the murdered girl. He further revealed the plans of actions on the said matter.

The Committee showed deep concerns on limited engagement of parents in pursuing the case due to economic pressures as they were neither the complainant nor a witness. However, these types of offences could not be resolved by a compromise and in the said case parents were not complainants and state should not do any compromise. The Mover of conveyed his contentment on investigation and his primary concern, as raised in the house, was that the accused should not receive any significant advantage as the implementation of capital punishment would solace the spirit of the deceased and her parents.

The Secretary of the Ministry of Human Rights also assured the Committee that the Ministry was providing legal and protective assistance to victims. The legal representative maintained a close working relationship with Regional Police Officer. The deceased body was transported to her residence. He added that the Ministry of Interior would proceed with further measures by providing notification accordingly but the Committee conveyed its dissatisfaction as long time was passed without the issuance of the notification. The Committee expressed contentment with the investigation and commended the effective collaboration among all parties involved (Rights, Report on Point of Public Importance raised by Senator Waleed Iqbal, 2020). The Point of Public Importance was resolved and report was presented to the House.

Senator Sherry Rehman introduced "Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Bill, 2020" in the House on February 10, 2020. The purpose of Bill was to establish legal provisions to render custody torture and death punishable offences. The objective was to provide assistance to persons who had experienced custodial torture (Rehman, Senate Debates, February 10, 2020). The committee reviewed the Bill and proposed a series of modifications consisting on 19 amendments in different clauses. However the committee unanimously endorsed its submission to the House and asked for approval of bill if the recommended changes were acceptable (Rights, Report on "Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Bill, 2020", 2020).

On June 8, 2020, Senator Seemee Ezdi on behalf of Senator Samina Saeed introduced "The Women (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2020." The bill stood presented and Chairman referred it to the Functional Committee on Human Rights (Ezdi, 2020). On August 17, 2020 the Committee discussed the bill and asked its proponents to postpone the bill. The Ministry of Human Rights added that the bill could not be taken into consideration as a same legislation was already been enacted. The Committee asked the movers to withdraw, revise, and resubmit the Bill for further consideration (Rights, Report on "The Women (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2020", 2020). The report was submitted to the House on August 31, 2020.

During the year 2020, the committee witnessed two severe kinds of cases, i.e. Zainab Alert Bill and killing case of Zahra Shah. The other two were also important in their nature. However, the Committee in all referred works proposed valuable recommendations and assured best legislation to foster the peace in the country by securing the human rights. The year 2021 until March 12, witnessed one referred work to the committee that was again based on proposed amendment in "Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery (Amendment) Act, 2020."

On October 26, 2020, Senator Siraj-ul-Haq proposed amendment in the said bill. The Bill was successfully enacted by the Parliament and possessed a distinct character in mitigating and regulating instances of child abuse. The Senator asked for trails of victims under the 19 proposed sections of Pakistan Penal Code. The committee met on February 1, 2021 and considered the Bill. The committee recommended the Presenter to withdraw the bill that was accepted by the member in-charge (Rights, Report on "Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery (Amendment) Act, 2020", 2021).

### **Conclusion**

The Senate Committee on Human Rights in Pakistan had significantly contributed to the promotion of peace and harmony within the nation during 2018-2021. The committee had continually endeavored to tackle diverse human rights concerns, especially related to the sentiments of common people. It fostered inclusiveness, and upheld justice for women, children, juvenile, and for all members of society. The committee had diligently eradicated discrimination, safeguarded the underprivileged communities, and maintained the tenets of human rights. The active collaboration with pertinent parties, the committee had worked effectively and advanced the

social equity. The committee's dedication to promote peacebuilding was apparent in its discussion and reconciliation among affected persons. The committee significantly fostered a climate of tolerance by opening dialogues and encouragement of mutual understanding.

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