

PRESS RELEASE

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PCHR stressed the need for ensuring legal framework for the protection of refugees rights in Pakistan

Islamabad: Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights (PCHR) firmly believes in protecting and promoting the rights of internally displaced persons IPDs in Pakistan. It was said in a high-profile meeting of executive members of PCHR and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) held in PCHR Secretariat Islamabad. The UNHCR delegation comprised of Ms. Wendy Chamberlain Deputy High Commissioner, Ms. Guenet Gusbre Christos Country Representative to Pakistan, Mr. Indrika Ratwatie, Assistant Representative to Pakistan and Mr. Jahangir Durrani Legal Officer UNHCR Pakistan. From PCHR, Chairman Mr. Riaz Fatyana MNA, Director PCHR and former Senator and Minister of State for Interior Dr. Shehzad Waseem and Chief Coordinator Mr. Shafique Chaudhry participated in the meeting. Talking to the delegation Mr. Riaz Fatyana MNA said that Pakistan is host of million of refugees and has been dealing with them in cooperation of UNHCR. But in spite of this big sacrifice of Pakistan in hosting these refugees, government officials, legislators and policy formulators are generally unaware of the issues of refugees. Resultantly, they suffer a lot of problems and remain deprived of their basic rights. Mr. Chairman added that there are lacunas concerning legal status of refugees in Pakistan and the Constitution lacks provisions for refugees and need for formulating a legal mechanism is imperative.

Director PCHR Dr. Shehzad Waseem maintained that Pakistan is in a strange situation, on one hand we are member of UNHCR Executive Committee (because of hosting one of the largest number of refugees, while on the other hand have not yet signed the 1951 Convention concerning the Statues of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol due to which policy issues towards refugees like protection management, asylum system, security problems and social and economic impact on local communities could not be addressed effectively. That is why refugees are treated under the Foreigners Act 1946. To ensure comprehensive and viable legal framework, it is binding upon government to make arrangement for signing and ratifying international conventions. He added that once state signs and ratifies international treaty, it becomes bound to harmonize its customary law with international standards. UNHCR High Commissioner Ms. Wendy Chamberlain appreciated the efforts of PCHR for protecting the rights of refugees and assured that UNHCR will support PCHR in matters of policy formulation and legislation regarding protection of refugees' rights in Pakistan. Earlier Chief Coordinator PCHR Mr. Shafique Chaudhry brief the delegation of UNHCR about the work and efforts done by the commission in respect to protecting refugees rights. He said that PCHR has submitted detailed recommendations and suggestions in Foreigners Act 1946, and in future too, intends to lobby with the government of Pakistan to sign and ratify the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees and 1967 Protocol, and it will work with UNHCR to formulate a result-oriented strategy dealing with all the issues of foreigners in Pakistan.

Following numbers will be reachable round the clock for any information or help:
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