



# PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations on "Women and Armed Conflict" at the Security Council (28 October, 2002).**

**Mr. President,**

Allow me to begin by expressing our appreciation to you for convening today's open debate. We welcome this discussion on a very important issue. We also welcome the letter containing the Independent Expert Assessment on the impact of armed conflict on women and the role of women in peace-building. We view the present initiative as an important opportunity to reflect on the plight of women in conflict situations as well as on their role in conflict resolution, conflict prevention and peace-building.

**Mr. President,**

2. The plight of women in armed conflict has a history which is as long as the history of warfare itself. The American writer, Kate Richards O'Hare, wrote almost a century ago: "It is the women who pay the price while war rages, and it will be the women who will pay again when war has run its bloody course." There are specific injunctions – in the Geneva Conventions and human rights instruments – proscribing torture, violence, rape and other ill-treatment of women during conflicts. Unfortunately, these injunctions have been honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

**Mr. President,**

3. The march of civilization has not reduced the suffering and special vulnerabilities of women in situations of armed conflict. Crimes against women have been frequent in several recent and on-going conflicts. Systematic rape has been used to terrorize populations, force displacement and demoralize adversaries – as in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Afghanistan's two decades of conflict, the destitution of women was a pervasive consequence.

4. In the on-going freedom struggle in Jammu and Kashmir also, rape and the humiliation of women and girls has been used as an instrument of war. Human rights organizations testified since 1992 that in Jammu and Kashmir "rape and ill-treatment of women are usually reported to have taken place during counter-insurgency operations" by Indian forces. Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights documented the extensive use of rape by the occupation forces designed "to punish and humiliate the entire community." Amnesty International has reported that "harassment, abduction, rape and deliberate and arbitrary killings perpetrated by pro-Indian "renegades" in Kashmir" are also carried out "with the support of the (Indian) security forces."

5. Destitution of women is another manifestation of the conflict in Kashmir. There are thousands of women who have been widowed, or whose husbands have been maimed, or have

disappeared, or are in detention. We urge the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to prepare a survey of the number of such destitute Kashmiri women. The international community should take appropriate measures to provide help and compensation to these Kashmiri women. We urge humanitarian agencies, specially the ICRC, to act as the instrument and avenue for such relief distribution. Political considerations should not stand in the way of international humanitarian agencies responding to the plight of Kashmir women and children suffering from the long and bloody conflict in their homeland.

**Mr. President,**

6. In April 2000, the Security Council adopted its landmark resolution 1325 on women and armed conflict. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform of Action also contains comprehensive recommendation on women and armed conflict". The Security Council must strengthen the processes for the observance and implementation of the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights in international conflicts, including those relating to the protection of women. We believe the Council must not only ensure prompt and effective responses to crisis situations irrespective of their geographical locations but also avoid selectivity in the implementation of its resolutions. The Charter contains provisions, including in Chapter VI, which can be utilized for the purpose of promoting implementation of Council resolutions.

7. The International Expert Assessment and the Secretary-General's report has submitted several relevant proposals to the Council. The Pakistan delegation further suggests the following measures for the Council's consideration:

**First,** adoption of a declaration that the targeting of women, especially the use of rape as an instrument of war, will be considered a "war crime", susceptible to national and international punishment.

**Second,** initiation of a study of recent and ongoing conflict situations to identify crimes committed against women, with a view to seeking redress and compensation for the victims;

**Third,** current and future UN peacekeeping operations be required to monitor and regularly report to the Security Council on the situation of women and girls in their mission areas;

**Fourth,** encourage the fullest possible participation of women in peace processes as well in post-conflict peace-building, including in reintegration, reconstruction and rehabilitation of societies in the post-conflict phase.

**Fifth,** ask the UN's specialized organs and agencies to evolve ways to address the special needs of women and girls affected by conflict including health and psychological care.

**Sixth,** the Security Council may involve other UN bodies, as well as representatives of the civil society, perhaps using the Arria Formula, for a comprehensive discussion to promote such recommendations and actions.

**I thank you, Mr. President.**