

Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians During Armed Conflict
Monday, 22nd November 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ambassador Anjad Hussain B Sial, Acting Permanent Representative of Pakistan to United Nations

Mr. President, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express our appreciation for your able presidency of the Council this month. We listened attentively to the briefings by the Under-Secretaries-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The Government of Pakistan strongly condemns attacks on civilians under all circumstances. Pakistan has been a strong and active supporter of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Over the years, Pakistan has contributed to international efforts, particularly those led by the United Nations, for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The most tangible demonstration of this, as the Council is well aware, is our participation as the top troop contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions. We are very keen to make this debate more useful and to work together in focusing our energies to enhance implementation capacity to ensure more effective protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Objective reporting is a basic prerequisite for the consideration of this important issue. Systematic and consistent violations of the rights of civilians are frequent and pervasive around the world, especially in situations of foreign occupation. In our view, the report (S/2010/579) should have informed us more objectively about parts of the world where innocent people continue to suffer every day, including in situations that are on the agenda of the Council. The report contains unwarranted and unacceptable references to Pakistan, for which there is no justification whatsoever. The assertions made therein are completely misplaced and factually incorrect. Pakistan is a vibrant democracy. By no stretch of imagination can the situation in Pakistan be described as an internal armed conflict. Pakistan has successfully confronted terrorism, which has roots in the conflict and strife in Afghanistan resulting from cold war dynamics. It is a lethal nexus of drugs and organized crime gangs, funded and supplied with weapons that pose a threat to Afghanistan's neighbours and to the global community as a whole. The consequence is that innocent civilians across the world, including in Pakistan, have been targeted.

Pakistan will continue to do all it can to eliminate terrorism. This we do to protect our people from terrorists and criminal gangs. We seek peace, prosperity and stability in order to achieve our development goals. We have, in this struggle, the full support of our people.

On a different plane, the report seeks perhaps to build an argument for allowing contact with non-State armed groups. This raises many serious questions, including that of the applicability of international humanitarian law to counter-terrorism. Certainly, no one would wish to advocate contact with or sympathy for Al-Qaida and hard-core criminal gangs. 10-64740 17 We are perplexed when we see that many countries across the world that are facing situations involving insurgencies, and where protection of civilians has been a concern, fail to make even a passing reference in the report. It is also a matter of grave concern to us that the report omits any reference to the serious and systematic violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Indian-occupied Kashmir that have been widely reported by the international media and civil society.

We hope that future reports on this agenda item will be balanced and more carefully drafted. It is important to address these issues objectively and to avoid politicizing questions relating to international humanitarian law.