

Ambassador Doru Costea  
President  
Human Rights Council  
Geneva

Geneva, 7 November 2007

Dear Ambassador Costea



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We are writing to seek your urgent intervention as President of the Human Rights Council, and that of the Bureau of the Council, concerning two of the Council's Special Procedures, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Asma Jahangir, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, Hina Jilani.

On 3 November 2007, the President of Pakistan, General Musharraf, declared a state of emergency that has led to the detention of hundreds of human rights defenders, contrary to Pakistan's international human rights obligations. We have been informed that Ms Jahangir, the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, was placed under house arrest over the last weekend, subject to a 90 day order. This action effectively prevents her from discharging her responsibilities as a mandate holder of the Council.

We are concerned that Ms Jilani, the Special Representative on the situation of Human Rights Defenders, who is presently outside Pakistan, faces house arrest under a similar order when she returns to Pakistan. This threat is subjecting Ms Jilani to pressure that in itself affects the discharge of her responsibilities. If she returns to be placed under house arrest, she too will be entirely prevented from acting under her mandate.

Action restricting or preventing the Council's mandate holders from discharging their responsibilities is intolerable under any circumstances. The fact that the action is being taken by a member of the Council makes the situation even more serious. General Assembly resolution 60/251 establishing the Council requires that "members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, (and) shall fully cooperate with the Council."

We ask that the Bureau of the Council require Pakistan to account to the Council as a matter of urgency for its conduct in relation to the mandate holders in terms of its responsibility under the General Assembly resolution. Pakistan should be required to lift all restrictions on Ms Jahangir and Ms Jilani so that they are able to continue their work under their mandates from the Council without pressure, threat or interference.

We request an opportunity for representatives of our organisations in New York to discuss this situation with you personally and urgently. We ourselves will be seeking meetings with other members of the Bureau here in Geneva.

Yours sincerely



Chris Sidoti for

Amnesty International  
Fédération Internationales des  
Droits de l'Homme  
Human Rights Watch  
International Service for Human Rights  
Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture  
Pax Romana

Irene Khan, Secretary General  
Souhayr Belhassen, President  
Ken Roth, Executive Director  
Chris Sidoti, Director  
Eric Sottas, Director  
Budi Tjahjono, Coordinator

cc Permanent Representatives, Human Rights Council Member States