

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 17, 2017

The Honorable Alice G. Wells
Acting Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW,
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable David Hale
U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan
American Embassy
Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna-5
Islamabad, Pakistan

Re: Human Rights in Sindh

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary Wells and Ambassador Hale:

We write to express our concerns about human rights violations in the Sindh province of Pakistan. With the United States undertaking a review of policy toward Pakistan, and the recent political leadership changes in that country, we urge you to place a priority on human rights and democracy in your interactions with the Government of Pakistan.

The State Department notes that “we have a broad multi-faceted partnership with Pakistan,”¹ but we must ensure that human rights are a priority. In 2016, Amnesty International reported that Pakistani security forces “committed human rights violations with almost total impunity,”² while Human Rights Watch observed that “law enforcement and security agencies remained unaccountable for human rights violations.”³ The State Department itself noted that, in Pakistan, “the most serious human rights problems were extrajudicial and targeted killings; disappearances; torture; lack of rule of law...; gender inequality; violence against gender and sexual minorities; and sectarian violence.”⁴

We are concerned about a number of ongoing human rights violations in Sindh. First, advocates for political and social rights are taken into custody and imprisoned on questionable grounds.⁵

¹ “U.S. Relations With Pakistan,” Office Of The Special Representative For Afghanistan And Pakistan, Fact Sheet, January 24, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3453.htm>

² “Pakistan 2016/17,” Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/pakistan/report-pakistan>

³ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017- Pakistan, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/pakistan>

⁴ “Pakistan 2016 Human Rights Report,” Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/sca/265546.htm>, released March 3, 2017.

⁵ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *HRCP Annual Report 2015*, <http://hrqp-web.org/hrqpweb/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Jails-and-Prisoners.pdf>; “Extrajudicial killings rise in Pakistan police crackdown in Karachi,” Reuters, August 9, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-police-killings-insight-idUSKCN0QE0WL20150810>

Just recently, a leading Pakistani daily wrote about continuing “enforced disappearances of political activists in the province” of Sindh.⁶

Second, the people of Sindh face religious extremist attacks. Sindh has historically welcomed peoples of all faiths and ethnicities, and is home to significant communities of Christians, Sufis, and Hindus. Yet religious extremism, and the government’s unwillingness or inability to curb groups linked to extremism, contribute to violence, including against minorities. For instance, in February this year, ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack on a Sufi shrine in Sindh that killed over 80 people.

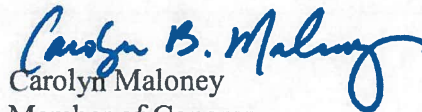
Third, there are forced conversions of Sindhi girls belonging to minority communities. While the numbers are unclear, reports suggest that every year, over 1,000 girls and young women in Pakistan, including many in Sindh, are forcibly converted upon marriage.⁷ The Pakistani government has not done enough to stop this practice, and reform measures are circumvented or not enforced.

We urge you to work with the Government of Pakistan to seek the release of persons held on false charges in Sindh, to protect religious freedoms of the Sindhi people, to end the forced conversions of minority Sindhi girls and women, and to take stronger steps upholding human rights in Sindh.

Sincerely,



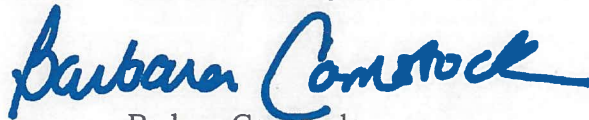
Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff
Member of Congress



Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress



Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Trent Franks
Member of Congress

⁶ “Missing in Sindh,” *Dawn*, August 8, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1350207/missing-in-sindh>

⁷ “Forced conversion, marriage and the endless cycle of misogyny,” *Herald*, March 17, 2017, <http://herald.dawn.com/news/1153698>