



AN INITIATIVE OF
THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMISSION OF JURISTS

EMINENT JURISTS PANEL

on

Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Global inquiry on counter-terrorism and human rights continues South Asia study in Pakistan

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The Eminent Jurists Panel on Terrorism, Counter-terrorism and Human Rights begins a two-day public hearing in Islamabad on Monday 5 March to examine and assess the responses of Pakistan to the threat of terrorism and its impact on human rights and the rule of law. The hearing is the second part of the Panel's study of South Asia's responses to terrorism.

The Panel will be represented by its Chair, Arthur Chaskalson, former Chief Justice and first President of South Africa's Constitutional Court and Vitit Muntarbhorn, leading human rights advocate and Professor of Law in Bangkok, who is currently United Nations' expert on human rights in North Korea. The hearing is hosted by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, an affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ).

"Pakistan is a key player in the global debate on terrorism", said Justice Arthur Chaskalson. "Its society faces serious terrorist threats. However, as in other countries that the panel visited previously, concerns have been voiced about the negative impact of terrorism and counter-terrorism measures on human rights and the rule of law", he added.

The public hearing is part of a global inquiry by the Panel, a high-level and independent group appointed by the ICJ in October 2005. It is the twelfth in a series of hearings held around the world by the Panel. The visit to Islamabad forms part of a study of laws and policies of terrorism, counter-terrorism in South Asia.

"We came to listen to a broad range of perspectives, from civil society and the authorities to get a fully considered understanding of the challenge posed by terrorism and counter-terrorism for the protection of human rights in Pakistan", said Professor Muntarbhorn.

In two days of high-level public hearings (Monday 5-Tuesday 6 March) in Islamabad at the Holiday Inn Hotel, the Panel will hear testimony from a wide range of actors, including leading lawyers, academics, national and international human rights organisations, and members of the public affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism. Following the hearing, the Panel members will hold private meetings with senior government representatives in Islamabad, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights and the Law and Justice Commission.

The public hearing is open to the media. The Panel will share its conclusions on its visit to Pakistan with the media on Wednesday 7 March at 5pm at House 56, Street 35, F-6/1, Islamabad.

Background

The Panel is composed of eight judges, lawyers and academics from all regions of the world. It exercises its mandate independently, with the logistical support of the ICJ

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

Secretariat and its network of organizations. Arthur Chaskalson, former Chief Justice and first President of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, chairs the Panel.

The other members are Vitit Muntarbhorn (Thailand), Professor of Law at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok and UN expert on human rights in North Korea; Hina Jilani (Pakistan), a lawyer before the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders; Mary Robinson, now Head of the Ethical Globalization Initiative, and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former President of Ireland; Stefan Trechsel (Switzerland), former President of the European Commission on Human Rights, and judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia; Georges Abi-Saab (Egypt), former Judge at the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda; Robert K. Goldman (United States), Professor of Law at American University's Washington College of Law, a former President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and former UN expert on counter-terrorism and human rights; and Justice E. Raúl Zaffaroni (Argentina), a judge at the Supreme Court of Argentina.

The Panel has held hearings in Australia, Colombia, East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda), the United Kingdom (in London on current counter-terrorism policies and in Belfast on lessons from the past), North Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), the United States, the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay), South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand) and the Russian Federation. Prior to coming to Pakistan the panel had held a hearing in New Delhi (Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka and India). Other countries or regions where the Panel will also hold hearings include Canada, the Middle East and Europe. The final report of the Panel is expected to be published towards the end of 2007.

For further information on the public hearing and to arrange interviews with the Panel, please contact:

In Islamabad:

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