

BALUCH PROTEST

On 06-12-2023, hundreds of Baluch persons started their protest from Turbat to Islamabad after a killing of a Baluch youth allegedly by the security agencies. The protestors reached Islamabad on 20-12-2023 after their journey of several days. The Islamabad Police tried to stop the arrival of the protestors by using tear gas and baton charge. Some Baluch students studying in the educational institutions of twin cities (who were also the part of the protest) were arrested by the Islamabad Police.

The NCHR by showing its serious concerns on the violation of human rights had written a letter to the Inspector General of Police, Islamabad on the use of force against the protestors specially against that of women and children. However, the Islamabad Police in its reply stated that Police has not shown any type of brutality against the women and children and only Police force was used to disburse the protestors who were trying to disrupt the Law & Order situation. However, the NCHR was not agreed with the view point of Islamabad Police and advised the Islamabad Police that in future, interaction should be reflect on appropriate level of engagement and acknowledgment of the critical nature and gravity of the human rights concerns bought by Baluch protestors.

The NCHR paid several visits to the camp of the protestors established at the Press Club, Islamabad. Chairperson, NCHR herself alongwith a team of the NCHR visited the Camp and met with the elders / leaders of the protestors. Secretary, NCHR and Chief Coordinator, NCHR also separately visited the sit-in of the protestors for knowing the real demands. In addition to the visit of sit-in at Press Club, Islamabad, the NCHR team also visited the lock-ups of the police stations in Islamabad, where the students were detained. During the visit of the lock-ups of police stations, Secretary, NCHR advised the Police authorities for keeping good behaviour with the detained persons and also for the provision of all necessary facilities to the detainees. The detainees informed that they have no complaints about the behaviour of police authorities, however, they informed that they have been kept in a very small place. On the advice of the NCHR team, the SHO of the concerned police station assured for better treatment and extending of necessary facilities to the detained students.

The NCHR also brought this situation in writing to the notice of the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights and suggested that the elders/leaders of the protestors may be invited in the meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights for knowing their grievances, which can reduce unrest, anger and difficulties of the protestors. The NCHR also informed the leaders of the protestors about this situation. The said letter of

the NCHR was discussed in the meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights held on 29-12-2023. The Committee appreciated and commend the efforts and concerns of the NCHR in this regard. Senator Waleed Iqbal, Chairman, Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights, however, informed that the Senate officials contacted with the leaders of the protestors but they refused to come in the meeting, as they are already busy in preoccupations.

The issue of the Baloch protestors was also discussed in the Islamabad High Court before the honourable Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani. The Chief Coordinator and Law Officer of NCHR attended the proceedings of the court. The court directed the police authorities for better treatment to the protestors and CDA officials were also advised for the provision of washrooms and establishment of Medical Dispensary for protestors. The NCHR team also visited the Dispensary established for this purpose at the site of sit-in and noticed that doctors and para medical staff have been deputed in the Dispensary.

The protest was ended on 23-01-2024. No untoward incident reported on the behaviour of the Police later on. However, Dr. Maharang Baloch, leader of the protestor was not happy on the results of the ending of the protest, as she gave the statement that they are going back with pain and suffering.

The issue of Baloch missing persons again surfaced in the Islamabad High Court on 19-02-2024 before the Honorable Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani and the next hearing of the case is fixed for 28-02-2024. The Care Taker Prime Minister has also been advised to appear before the Islamabad High Court.